

For immediate release

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American Association of Medical Assistants to Partner with University of Nevada, Reno to Prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

RENO and CHICAGO—September 18, 2015—As part of a coordinated national effort to prevent fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs), the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) and the Mountain Plains FASD Practice and Implementation Center (Mountain Plains PIC) of the Center for the Application of Substance Abuse Technologies (CASAT) at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) will work collaboratively to prepare medical assistants to reduce alcohol-exposed pregnancies and intervene with patients who engage in risky or hazardous alcohol use. The AAMA/Mountain Plains PIC partnership is supported by grant funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Prenatal alcohol exposure is a leading preventable cause of birth defects and developmental disabilities. The term fetal alcohol spectrum disorders is used to define the range of physical, mental, behavioral and/or learning disabilities that can result from prenatal alcohol exposure. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders are completely preventable if a woman does not drink alcohol during pregnancy.

The Mountain Plains PIC works with national medical societies, professional organizations, and other CDC-funded university-based PICs to develop, deliver, disseminate, and evaluate fetal alcohol spectrum disorders training and practice implementation programs for medical professionals. The goal of the Mountain Plains PIC program is to enhance awareness and change practice behaviors of medical assistants with regards to providing alcohol screening and brief interventions to patients to reduce risky and hazardous alcohol use. The AAMA will help the Mountain Plains PIC achieve these goals by contributing to the development and dissemination of training materials and practice resources.

Speaking about the decision to partner with the AAMA, Mountain Plains PIC Project Director, Nancy A. Roget, MS, MFT, LADC, said, “The AAMA was chosen as the designated national partner for the Mountain Plains PIC because they are the leading certifying and accrediting

body for medical assistants in the United States, with over 82,000 CMAs (AAMA). This innovative partnership will result in better preparation for medical assistants to routinely screen for and intervene with women and men who engage in unhealthy alcohol use.”

AAMA Chief Executive Officer and Legal Counsel, Donald A. Balasa, JD, MBA, says the partnership will demonstrate the important role medical assistants play in advancing the goals of this national health initiative. “CMAs (AAMA) are the key communication links between patients and providers, and are uniquely positioned to motivate patients to avoid or stop dangerous alcohol consumption. The AAMA is fully committed to this initiative, and is honored to partner with Mountain Plains PIC and the CDC to combat fetal alcohol spectrum disorders,” said Balasa.

Funding for the AAMA partnership with the Mountain Plains PIC begins September 30, 2015, and both organizations look forward to an impactful collaboration to reduce fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

About the Mountain Plains FASD PIC

The Mountain Plains FASD PIC is based at the University of Nevada, Reno’s (UNR) Center for the Application of Substance Abuse Technologies (CASAT), which is part of the University’s Division of Health Sciences. UNR has been funded by the CDC as an FASD Regional Training Center since 2008 and was awarded the FASD PIC grant in 2014. The goal of the FASD PICs is to expand previous efforts from FASD training programs and shift the perspective from individual training for medical and allied health care professionals to impacting health care practice at the systems level and focusing on prevention opportunities.

About the AAMA

The mission of the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) is to provide the medical assistant professional with education, certification, credential acknowledgment, networking opportunities, scope-of-practice protection, and advocacy for quality patient-centered health care. Medical assistants are multiskilled members of the health care team who perform administrative and clinical procedures under the supervision of licensed health care providers. The CMA (AAMA) is awarded to candidates who pass the CMA (AAMA) Certification or Recertification Examination. The National Board of Medical Examiners serves as test consultant for the exam. The CMA (AAMA) credential must be recertified every 60 months by the continuing education or re-examination method in order to use the credential.

For more information from AAMA:

Visit www.aama-ntl.org or call the AAMA directly at 800/228-2262.

For more information from Mountain Plains PIC:

Visit www.casat.org or call the Mountain Plains PIC directly at 866/617-2816.

For more information on FASD Training & Education:

Visit www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/training.html or call the CDC’s Information Line at 800/232-4636.