

# **Guidelines**

**for**

# **Medical Assisting Student Groups**

**American Association of Medical Assistants  
Membership Strategy Team**

**Revised March 2011**

# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of the Guidelines

The American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) has prepared these guidelines to assist in the development of Medical Assisting Student Groups. These groups will serve to broaden the knowledge of the medical assisting student and promote interest in the medical assisting profession and in the AAMA. A Medical Assisting Student Group is not intended to function as a chapter, but in addition to a chapter.

These guidelines outline the purpose, structure and benefits of Medical Assisting Student Groups. They are intended for use by student members, officers, and faculty advisors.

## AAMA Information

The American Association of Medical Assistants was formed in 1955. The AAMA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the professional advancement of medical assistants.

The AAMA is a trilevel organization: national, state, and local. Members of the AAMA are committed to the pursuit of their profession. In their desire to merit the high regard of the entire medical profession and the respect of the general public, which they serve, members of the AAMA strive to:

- Render service with respect for the dignity of humanity
- Respect confidential information obtained through employment, unless legally authorized or required by responsible performance of duty to divulge such information
- Uphold the honor and high principles of the profession and accept its disciplines
- Seek to continually improve the knowledge and skills of medical assistants for the benefit of patients and professional colleagues
- Participate in services and activities aimed toward improving the health and well being of the community

Further information on the organization may be obtained by contacting the Membership Department at AAMA, 800/228-2262 ext. 774, or online at [www.aama-ntl.org](http://www.aama-ntl.org).

## Medical Assisting Student Groups

Medical Assisting Student Groups began in 1985 and are designed for students who plan careers in medical assisting. Complete professional development requires knowledge that goes beyond the classroom. Student Groups provide opportunities to exchange information with members of the medical community, to explore career opportunities, to develop leadership skills, to render community service, and to interact with Certified Medical Assistants.

Medical assisting programs may be accredited through the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) or through the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES). A Student Group may be formed at any CAAHEP or ABHES accredited postsecondary institution offering curriculum leading to an associate degree, diploma, or certificate in medical assisting. The name of this group should be (Name of School) Medical Assisting Student Group.

# ORGANIZING A MEDICAL ASSISTING STUDENT GROUP

## Selection of a Faculty Advisor

Identify a faculty member who will assist in the initial phase and serve as advisor to the Student Group once it is organized. The faculty advisor is a valuable resource in guiding the activities of the student officers and ensuring the continuity of the Student Group.

The advisor has specific responsibilities in starting a new Medical Assisting Student Group, as well as in assisting and monitoring the performance of an existing group. The faculty advisor will:

- Initiate contact with the AAMA local chapter and/or state society, to advise them of intent to form a Medical Assisting Student Group and establish a cooperative relationship
- Assist the Student Group in planning, organizing, and conducting programs and business
- Attend student meetings
- Provide support to the student officers
- Encourage student members to participate in local and state AAMA activities

## Use of AAMA as a Resource

The local AAMA chapter is a valuable resource for advising and guiding Student Group operations. Chapter members can be asked to provide programs on topics which might be especially interesting to students, such as basic requirements needed to enter the profession, positions graduates may expect to obtain, additional training graduates may be required to obtain on the job, personality traits sought by employers for different positions and other topics of technical, medical, or general interest.

## Determination of Rules of Schools Governing Formation of Medical Assisting Student Groups

Contact the Office of Student Affairs on campus to determine what criteria may be required to regulate formation and development of a Student Group.

## Informational Meeting

The prospective faculty advisor will work with interested students to establish a meeting time and place in keeping with the requirements of the school which can be publicized through the campus newspaper, bulletin boards, flyers at class registration, and with brief announcements in medical assisting classes.

At this introductory meeting, explain the purpose of the Medical Assisting Student Group. Describe the AAMA and its purpose. Decide upon meeting frequency, time, and

location, as well as amount of dues, if any. Explain that Student Groups may not use the AAMA logo.

## Selection of Officers and Suggested Duties

The Student Group membership is responsible for electing or selecting officers who will provide ongoing leadership. Generally the officers needed are president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer (or secretary-treasurer). The officers are responsible for planning, organizing, and administering activities. There are general and specific responsibilities for each of the officers, upon which successful operation is dependent.

President:	Presides at all meetings, is ex officio member of all committees, and appoints committees as needed.
Vice President:	Assists the president throughout the year and assumes the duties of the president in her/his absence.
Secretary:	Keeps records, including minutes of the business meetings. Handles any correspondence that may be necessary.
Treasurer:	Responsible for financial records, receipts, and disbursements. Collects dues, if any. If the school dictates, funds may be handled by the school comptroller.

## Selection of Committees and Suggested Duties

### Program/Education Committee

Each meeting should feature a preplanned program. While the majority of such programs should be relevant to medical assisting, topics of school or community interest can be included on occasion. This committee performs the following functions:

- Coordinates the meeting programs
- Selects programs that will provide professional enrichment for the members
- Plans community service activities
- Plans social events
- Encourages participation in meetings and seminars offered at the local, state, and national levels of AAMA

### Membership Committee

This committee coordinates the membership drive. The importance of continuous recruitment of new members and retention of current members cannot be overemphasized. Planned recruitment events should begin immediately after the new academic term begins and continue throughout the term. Incentive programs, social events, open meetings to orient prospective members, etc., can all be used to identify interested students.

For retention of current members and reactivation of student members who return after summer recess, a planned program of review and contact should be established. A technique for retention is involvement. Groups should, through committee projects and other means, maintain ongoing active involvement from as many members as possible.

In addition, this committee recognizes new members at meetings.

### Public Relations

This committee promotes the Medical Assisting Student Group by publicizing in the campus newsletter and on bulletin boards, by distributing handouts during registration, or by other appropriate means. The committee also produces a student newsletter to keep members advised of current activities and sends a copy of newsletter to the local chapter.

### Awards

Awards programs provide incentive and encourage professional growth through individual recognition. Award banquets provide excellent opportunities to gain involvement from student members and visibility for award recipients. (Such an event may be held in conjunction with the graduation banquet.)

Suggested awards include the following:

- Student Individual Performance
- Student Member of the Month
- Student Outstanding Performance

Individual members may be encouraged to work toward these awards by completing certain group activities. This committee establishes guidelines for the awards and the selection process, maintains records for all awards given, and plans events to recognize award recipients.

## **Suggestions for Standing Rules or Bylaws**

Article I	Name of Medical Assisting Student Group
Article II	Purpose/Objective
Article III	Organizational Policy
Article IV	Membership
Article V	Dues
Article VI	Officers – Selection and Duties
Article VII	Elections
Article VIII	Committees – Selection and Duties
Article IX	Meetings
Article X	Finances
Article XI	Rules of Order
Article XII	Amendments
Article XIII	Dissolution

# ACTIVITIES/OPERATIONS

## Education

Topics for educational programs at meetings might include effective communication, public speaking, computer concepts, HMOs, PPOs, IPAs, office techniques, and other topics of technical, medical, and general interest.

Resources for educational programs include the school faculty, the local AAMA chapter, the county medical society, hospitals, rehab centers, local associations such as the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society, representatives of pharmaceutical companies, and forms suppliers.

Other sources of education include the following:

- Public speaking – Student members can improve their leadership and communication skills by speaking before their groups or at outside organizations.
- Academic assistance – Student members can increase group and personal visibility by tutoring other students.
- Program participation – Student members should take advantage of educational programs offered by the local AAMA chapter. Organizing an internal educational program for participation by those who are not student members is an excellent project. It can enhance knowledge in specialized areas, gain visibility for the group and possibly raise funds.
- Certification programs – Review sessions to prepare for the AAMA Certification Examination can be arranged for member and nonmember medical assisting students.

## Community Service

Community service is an excellent means of gaining recognition in the community and increasing public awareness of medical assistants. Ample opportunities exist for student participation in community projects, such as health fairs and volunteering at nursing homes.

## Fund Raising

Funds may be raised and used to award a scholarship, improve the medical facilities at the school by purchasing equipment, donate to a medical facility, or allow the attendance of members at seminars, conferences, state conventions, or other functions. Criteria for fundraising should be cleared with the Office of Student Affairs.

## Recruitment into the Profession

Since the major objective of medical assisting students is to eventually secure employment, the potential for gaining experience through cooperative work/study, field study, and practica

should not be overlooked. Employers often look for experience in addition to education. Student Groups can work with the school administration to establish such programs, if not available, and to encourage members to take advantage of programs that are available. The same can be said for the school's job placement function.

## Miscellaneous

Meetings – Meetings involving the entire group should be held on a regular basis. The president should conduct the meeting in accordance with recognized rules of order.

Continuity of Operation – The nature of the academic year, and the number of changes in membership from term to term, make continuity of operation a significant challenge. Each group will have to make decisions regarding its term of office and other operational aspects. It is recommended that the group adhere as closely as possible to the academic terms set by the school.

## AAMA MEMBERSHIP

Student Group members are strongly encouraged to become members of the AAMA, the professional association for medical assistants. Membership opens the door to a variety of benefits to aid in professional growth and development. *Students must join the AAMA prior to graduation to take advantage of the student membership fee.*

Students may retain student membership for one additional dues year after graduation if active or associate membership is not chosen, but shall be limited to three years as a student member.

## Certification and Recertification

Certification proves the medical assistant's competency and increases career potential by demonstrating commitment to the profession, which results in peer recognition and respect. Certified Medical Assistants are recognized by physicians as highly skilled members of the allied health care team.

Only graduates of medical assisting programs accredited by CAAHEP or ABHES are eligible to take the CMA (AAMA) Certification Examination. AAMA membership offers the opportunity to register for the examination at a reduced fee.

Recertification shows that the medical assistant is maintaining competency at current standards of practice. In today's world, continuing education for the medical assisting profession is a necessity in the quest to keep abreast of new clinical and administrative procedures.

Recertification of the CMA (AAMA) credential became mandatory in 1993. The CMA (AAMA) credential must be recertified every five years either by re-examination or by accumulating 60 hours of continuing education.

The CMA (AAMA) Certification/Recertification Examination is given by computer throughout the year at testing centers across the country. Effective January 3, 2003, all Certified Medical Assistants employed or seeking employment must have current status in order to use the CMA (AAMA) credential.

## Continuing Education

Medical assistants who have successfully completed the Certification Examination and earned their credential should earn continuing education units (CEUs) toward recertification. The local chapters and state societies sponsor educational programs throughout the year, approved for CEU credit and designed to meet the medical assistant's professional needs. At the national level, self-study and online programs are available, which allow medical assistants to learn at their own pace and at home. In addition, the AAMA Annual Conference offers opportunities for education and networking.

## Scholarships

The AAMA offers the Maxine Williams Scholarship Fund, which awards scholarships to eligible medical assisting students. Applications may be obtained from the program directors of CAAHEP accredited medical assisting programs. Many state societies also offer scholarships for students.

## Publications

*CMA Today*, the official bimonthly journal of the AAMA, includes educational articles written for medical assistants. Additionally, organizational news is published in *CMA Today*. Each issue contains articles approved for AAMA CEU credit. Members may also receive publications from the state and local organizations.

## Group Insurance

The AAMA offers a wide variety of insurance programs at special group rates. Active and associate members that renew their AAMA membership are provided with a \$1000 accidental death and dismemberment policy as a member benefit.

## Professional Prestige

As part of a nationally recognized professional association, AAMA members gain stature in their career and community. Furthermore, they meet a new group of people with similar interests and goals. Meetings and educational programs enable them to share their views with other medical assistants, enriching everyone's professional experience.