

The Present and Future of the Medical Assisting Profession



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In the next 10 years, the number of medical assistants is projected to increase at a greater rate than the average rate of all other professions or occupations. This has been the case for at least 25 years.

Alternatives to medical assisting programs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) and the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) are increasing. These programs include the following:

- Training programs with less depth, breadth, and rigor than accredited programs
- In-house programs provided by health systems and clinics that offer simultaneous employment and training
- Programs in secondary schools
- Various apprenticeships
- On-the-job training

In general, medical assistants with less training than graduates of accredited medical assisting programs drive down the average remuneration for all medical assistants. Some employers may pay graduates of accredited programs more than they pay other medical assistants. However, this differential is often perceived as not large enough to justify the cost of accredited education. This is one reason why fewer medical assistants are choosing to enroll in accredited programs that are longer and more expensive than the aforementioned alternatives. This is also a reason why there is a shortage of accred-

ited program graduates who are CMAs (AAMA)*.

The Feasibility of an Add-On Credential

A strategy for the CMA (AAMA) credential to regain market share is to position the CMA (AAMA) so that its holders are proficient in advanced tasks in addition to entry-level medical assisting tasks. This would differentiate the CMA (AAMA) from other medical assisting credentials.

The Certifying Board (CB) of the AAMA is exploring the feasibility of establishing an add-on credential to the CMA (AAMA) in intravenous initiations and discontinuations. The add-on credential would require the completion of a course in the theory and technique of IV starts and discontinuations. To be considered, a course would require the successful performance of a sufficient number of IV starts and stops on live subjects (i.e., to clinical competence). It would also require the passing of an exam on IV starts and stops offered by the CB. Those who complete the course and pass the exam would be able to add the letters “IV” to their CMA (AAMA). The full credential would be “CMA (AAMA)-IV.”

The CB surveyed current CMAs (AAMA) and asked whether they would be interested in obtaining an IV credential as an add-on to the CMA (AAMA). A high percentage (95%) of the 10,000 current CMAs (AAMA) who responded to the survey answered in the affirmative.

The CB has issued to education provid-

ers (including accredited medical assisting programs) a request for proposal for a course in IV initiation and discontinuation for medical assistants. The CB will review any proposals it receives to determine which courses meet the CB’s standards.

Significantly, the request for proposal would be for a course in IV *starts and discontinuations*, not for IV *infusion*.

If the CB identifies one or more courses in IV initiation and discontinuation that meet its standard, it will explore the feasibility of creating an exam on IV starts and stops that would result in an IV add-on credential to the CMA (AAMA).

State Law on IV Delegation

Six states permit medical assistants—who, in some of the six states, meet certain requirements established by law—to initiate IVs: Florida, Maryland, Montana, Washington, Texas, and Oklahoma. These IV legal provisions were not the result of efforts by the medical assisting profession in the six states. In Florida, the impetus for the Florida Board of Medicine to issue a 2009 opinion allowing physicians to delegate to medical assistants IV infusion was a request of a physician. As best as can be determined, the boards of medical examiners in the other five states did not oppose the legislation or regulations that permitted delegation to medical assistants of certain IV tasks.

Approximately 15 states forbid medical assistants from performing IV tasks.

Approximately 29 states’ laws neither specifically authorize nor forbid medical

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Legal Eye On Medical Assisting



assistants to be delegated and to perform IV tasks.

The creation of a course and credential in IV initiation and discontinuation for medical assistants could result in boards of medical examiners and boards of nursing amending their regulations to allow medical assistants to be delegated IV tasks by (respectively) (1) physicians and physician assistants and (2) advanced practice registered nurses, particularly nurse practitioners.

If this occurs in some states, some providers would have an incentive to hire CMAs

(AAMA)-IV.

Potential Impact

Some prospective medical assisting students who want to focus on the clinical aspects of medical assisting would want to attend a CAAHEP- or ABHES-accredited medical assisting program so they would be eligible for the CMA (AAMA) Certification Exam and subsequently for the IV add-on credential.

This would distinguish the CMA (AAMA) credential from all other medical assisting credentials and would likely result

in CMAs (AAMA)-IV being paid more for their additional knowledge and skill in IV starts and stops.

If the CMA (AAMA)-IV comes to fruition and is successful, it may be prudent to determine whether other advanced add-on clinical credentials should be considered. It has been suggested that a credential in inserting urethral catheters may be a possibility. ♦

Questions may be directed to CEO and Legal Counsel Donald A. Balasa, JD, MBA, at DBalasa@aama-ntl.org.

Every year, we celebrate
Medical Assistants Recognition
Week (MARWeek) during the
third full week in October:

MARWeek: October 20–24, 2025

MARDay: October 22, 2025

The AAMA provides tools (i.e., promotional MARWeek packets and products) to help you celebrate medical assistants as true partners in health care. Visit the AAMA Store online in August to order.*

*Orders will be sent out through early October while supplies last. You may also download the MARWeek logo and materials, such as sample messaging, from the MARWeek webpage, which is found within the “Education and Events” tab.

