Healthcare Support

Medical Assistants

Medical Assistants work under the supervision of physicians and perform clinical and administrative work to help keep a health professional's office running smoothly. There are two types of medical assistants: Administrative Medical Assistants and Clinical Medical Assistants.

Administrative Medical Assistants update and file patient's medical records, fill out insurance forms, arrange for hospital admissions and laboratory services, answer telephones, greet patients, schedule appointments, and handle billing and bookkeeping.

Clinical Medical Assistants have duties that vary by state. They typically take medical histories, record blood pressure, heart rate and temperature, prepare patients for examinations, collect and prepare laboratory specimens, dispose of contaminated materials, sterilize equipment, arrange instruments and equipment for examinations. Under the direction of a physician they may also educate patients about their medications and special diets, administer prescriptions, telephone prescriptions to pharmacies and authorize medication refills. In addition, medical assistants will draw blood, remove sutures, and change dressings.

Medical assistants can specialize in areas such as ophthalmology and podiatry. Ophthalmic medical assistants assists physicians who provide eye care in diagnostic testing, measuring and recording vision, testing eye muscle function, and showing patients how to use their contacts. Podiatric medical assistants assist podiatrists (physicians who work with feet) in making castings, exposing and developing x-rays, and assisting in surgery.

Medical assistants have constant interaction with patients and generally work in well lit and clean environments, often handling several tasks at once. Most medical assistants work 40 hour weeks but may be required to work nights, weekends, and holidays if they work in facilities that operate 24 hours.

Education/Training

How to Obtain:

Formal educational training to become a medical assistant is preferred, but not required. Some medical assistants undergo on-the-job training bust most complete 1 year certificate or diploma or 2 year associate degree programs that are offered at vocational schools or community colleges. For medical assistants wanting to work in NY State their training program must be accredited through the New York State Education

Department, the Commission of Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) or the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES).

While certification as a medical assistant is not required, it can indicate that the medical assistant meets certain standard of knowledge and may be beneficial for denoting experience and receiving a higher salary. The American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) and the Association of Medical Technologists (AMT) offer medical assistant certification. Recertification is required through documented continued training and education.

Requirements for certification through the AAMA are:

- Graduation from an accredited medical assistant program

- Passing the CMA exam

- No felony convictions

- Recertify every 5 years

Requirements for certification through the AMT are:

- A graduate from an accredited medical technology program with a bachelor's degree in medical technology **OR**

- A graduate from an accredited college or university with a degree in the biological or chemical sciences and completed an accredited medical technology program

- Pass the AMT certification exam for medical technologists

More Information on Certification:

- American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA): http://www.aama-ntl.org/becomeCMA/how.aspx

- Association of Medical Technologists (AMT): http://www.amt1.com/

Average Costs:

American Association of Medical Students (AAMA) Exam Fee: $125 - $250, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

Association of Medical Technologists (AMT) Application/Exam Fee: $95, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

Costs of continuing education vary.