

Medical Assistants Overview

Medical Assistants work primarily in physician offices, helping doctors, nurses and other medical professionals with administrative and clinical tasks.

Administrative tasks include:

- Collect, document and file the patient's medical histories
- Maintain medical records, billing, and insurance coding
- Provide appropriate paperwork for obtaining releases and consent for release of medical information
- Process referrals
- Review records for completeness, accuracy, and compliance with rules and privacy regulations
- Schedule appointments

Clinical tasks include:

- Draw blood
- Measure and record vital signs
- Perform electrocardiograms (EKG's)
- Prepare examination and treatment rooms
- Prepare patients for examinations
- Prepare and administer medication and immunizations as ordered by physicians
- Provide assistance to physicians during examinations
- Process and file lab/diagnostic test results

Education Requirements

Medical Assistants must have a high school diploma or GED and a certificate from a training program. There are three community colleges in the Pioneer Valley region: Greenfield Community College (GCC), Holyoke Community College (HCC), and Springfield Technical Community College (STCC). There are also two for-profit schools that offer certificates in medical assistant training at varied cost and length for completion. Even though there are several programs to choose from, it is important to do some research prior to selecting a program.

Things to consider before selecting a training program:

- Some programs have a rolling admissions policy which gives applicants more flexibility on application submission and acceptance timelines.
- Massachusetts state regulations specify that only medical assistants who have graduated from a CAAHEP or ABHES accredited program are allowed to administer immunizations.
- Some programs may offer Credit for Prior Learning. This allows students to earn college credits by completing an exam or providing other evidence that they have mastered the skills, knowledge and competencies for a particular course. These credits are counted towards earning your degree.

Estimated Wages for Medical Assistants

Hampden County:

Entry: \$14.57/hr.

Median: \$17.69/hr.

Experienced: \$19.58/hr.

Franklin/Hampshire County:

Entry: \$13.68/hr.

Median: \$16.76/hr.

Experienced: \$18.59/hr.

Accreditation

Accreditation is the recognition that an institution maintains standards requisite for its graduates to gain admission to other reputable institutions of higher learning or to achieve credentials for professional practice.

The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality.

---US Dept. of Education

Before enrolling into a program, ensure that the program is accredited by either the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) or the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES)

CREDENTIAL

A credential is verification or proof that the MA has adequately attained the education and skills required. In many cases earning a credential means the MA must pass a state or national exam.



Education Options

Greenfield Community College (GCC) <http://www.gcc.mass.edu/>

Greenfield Community College delivers a 9 month certificate program and accept students through rolling admissions.

Program contact: Claire Tyminski – tyminskic@gcc.mass.edu – (413) 755-1129

Holyoke Community College (HCC) <https://www.hcc.edu/>

Holyoke Community College delivers a 12 month certificate program that begins each September of the new academic year.

Program contact: Janet Grant – jgrant@hcc.edu – (413) 552-2445

Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) <https://www.stcc.edu/>

Springfield Technical Community College delivers a 12 month certificate program. Graduates may also be eligible to take a national certification exam for Phlebotomists.

Program contact: Karolyn Ryan – kryan@stcc.edu – (413) 755-4951

* There are two for-profit schools that offer the medical assistant training programs in Pioneer Valley.

Get Your Credential

After completing a MA certificate program you must earn your credential. There are many credentials to choose from but regional employers recommend the **Certified Medical Assistant CMA (AAMA)** or **Registered Medical Assistant (RMA)**.

There are six possible exams/credentials that are available for MAs, but only two are highly recommended by employers. The full list of MA credentials is as follows:

Certified Medical Assistant CMA (AAMA) – requires that applicants graduate from a MA accredited program (specifically CAAHEP or ABHES). Certification fee range \$125 - \$250. Must recertify every 5 years.

<http://www.aama-ntl.org/>

Registered Medical Assistant (RMA) – requires that applicants graduate from a MA accredited program. Certification fee for the exam is \$120 for the exam and the first year of membership. Must recertify every 3 years.

<https://www.americanmedtech.org/>

Certified Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA) – does not require that applicants graduate from a MA accredited program. Certification fee is \$155. Must recertify every 2 years.

<https://www.nhanow.com/>

American Medical Certification Association (AMCA) – does not require that applicants graduate from a MA accredited program. Certification fee is \$109. Must recertify every 2 years.

<https://www.amcaexams.com/>

National Certified Medical Assistant (NCMA) – Applicants must graduate from a NCCT authorized program or 2+ years of MA experience with the past 5 years. Certification fee is \$90. Must recertify every year.

<https://www.ncctinc.com/certifications/MA.aspx>

American Allied Health Medical Assistant (RMA) - *** eligibility for this certificate is flexible but may not be recognized by your employer. Certification fee is \$109. Must recertify every year.

<https://www.americanalliedhealth.com/pages/medicalassistant.html>

Some of these organizations may require continuing education units as a condition for recertification.