

# Medical Assistant Program FAQ

**Q: I want to be a Medical Assistant. How do I start?**

A: First apply to the college, submit all necessary transcripts for evaluation (official from non-MNSCU schools), attend orientation and you will be advised and register for courses at that time. There is no internal separate application.

**Q: What is the difference between a Medical Assistant (MA) and an Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)?**

A: Medical Assistants are trained in the medical model of thinking. LPN's are trained in the nursing model of thinking. MA's are very skilled and are trained for high level of competency in their skills and abilities. They work side by side with the physician and are critical to the functioning of a medical/specialty clinic. The scope of practice for the Medical Assistant is very different than that of the LPN. MA's are cross trained to perform administrative and clinical duties.

**Q. What responsibilities can be included in a medical assistant's job description?**

A. Duties vary from office to office depending on location, size and specialty.

Administrative duties may include...

- Using computer applications
- Answering telephones
- Greeting patients
- Updating and filing patient medical records
- Coding and filling out insurance forms
- Scheduling appointments
- Arranging for hospital admissions and laboratory services
- Handling correspondence, billing and bookkeeping

Clinical duties vary by state, but may include...

- Taking medical histories
- Explaining treatment procedures to patients
- Preparing patients for examination
- Assisting the physician during the exam
- Collecting and preparing laboratory specimens
- Performing basic laboratory tests
- Instructing patients about medication and special diets
- Preparing and administering medications as directed by a physician
- Authorizing prescription refills as directed
- Drawing blood
- Taking electrocardiograms
- Removing sutures and changing dressings

**Q: What does CAAHEP mean?**

A: CAAHEP stands for Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs. This is our national accreditation agency. We applied for accreditation in late summer of 2013 and were approved and accredited in Spring 2014. Please see the website <http://www.caahep.org/> for more information.

**Q: What does CMA (AAMA) mean?**

A: CMA stands for Certified Medical Assistant. AAMA or American Association of Medical Assistants is the association in which certify the medical assistants. See the AAMA website <http://www.aama-ntl.org/> Students who graduate from our program are eligible to take the national exam for certification. This certification is required by many of our employer partners. The certification review course at the end of the curriculum prepares students to sit for this exam. All fees for the exam are paid by the student. Financial aid cannot be used for this exam. In some cases an employer may reimburse for the exam.

**Q: What is certification, and how is it obtained?**

A: The Certifying Board of American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) awards the CMA (AAMA) credential to medical assistants who have accomplished two objectives:

First, they have successfully completed a medical assisting educational program accredited by either the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) or the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES).

Second, they have passed the CMA (AAMA) Certification Examination. For more information, go to [How to Become a CMA \(AAMA\)](#).

**Q: I have applied to PTC and been accepted. Can I register for the Medical Assistant (MEDA) courses?**

A: Please attend an orientation in which you will be advised which courses are best for you to take as you start your educational journey. The sequencing of courses is important to ensure a timely graduation. If you have questions please see your academic advisor located on your DARS report (Available after you have been accepted to the college).

**Q: What is involved in the Practicum? Is it really 320 hours?**

A: The practicum is your opportunity to “try out” being a medical assistant. It is a full time non-paid course in which you will work 40 hours per week a regular shift. During the shift you will learn the in’s and out’s of being a medical assistant. You will be able to participate in practicing your skills, but also observe new things you may not have seen or experienced in the path. In some cases this may also be your interview for future employment. Students have been hired from their practicum site for full time work upon successful graduation from the program.

**Q: Is certification permanent?**

A: No. Medical assistants who are certified must recertify the credential every 60 months, either by earning credits known as [continuing education units](#) or by taking the CMA (AAMA) Certification/Recertification Examination.

Effective January 1, 2010, all newly certified and recertifying CMAs (AAMA) will be current through the end of the calendar month of initial certification or most recent recertification for 60 months after initial certification or most recent recertification.