

Medical Assisting in Arizona...

The functions a medical assistant can perform in Arizona may be different from those tasks permitted in other states. This brochure is designed to help medical assistants and the allopathic physicians, physician assistants and nurses who supervise them, determine appropriate training and behavior in the workplace.

What is a medical assistant?

A medical assistant (MA) is an unlicensed person who assists in the medical practice under the supervision of a physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner and performs delegated procedures appropriate with the MA's education and training. An MA does not diagnose, interpret, design or modify established treatment programs or perform any functions that would violate any statute applicable to the practice of medicine.

The Arizona Medical Board does not license, discipline or regulate medical assistants in Arizona. In fact, MA's operate independently and are only held to the training requirements set forth in rules. These rules, (R4-16-401 through R4-16-403), found on the Arizona Medical Board's website, www.azmd.gov, also provide a general overview of authorized procedures for a medical assistant. While not a comprehensive listing, when reviewed in conjunction with A.R.S. § 32-1456, physicians and physician assistants may decide which procedures they are comfortable delegating to their medical assistant. The most important thing for a physician or a physician assistant to remember when delegating tasks to a medical assistant is that the physician or physician assistant is ultimately responsible for the patient's care.

What procedures can a medical assistant do?

The procedures a medical assistant may perform are outlined in Statute (A.R.S. § 32-1456) and in Rule (R4-16-401 through R4-16-403). Both Statute and Rule establish which procedures can be performed under direct supervision of an allopathic* physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner and which procedures can be performed without direct supervision.

Some of the procedures an MA may perform under the direct supervision of a physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner include:

- Taking body fluid specimens
- Administering injections
- Whirlpool treatments
- Diathermy treatments
- Electronic galvaton stimulation treatments
- Ultrasound therapy
- Massage therapy
- Traction treatments
- Transcutaneous nerve stimulation unit treatments
- Hot and cold pack treatments
- Small volume nebulizer treatments

Some of the procedures an MA may perform without direct supervision include:

- Billing and coding
- Verifying insurance
- Making patient appointments
- Scheduling
- Recording a doctor's findings in patient charts and transcribing materials in patient charts and records
- Performing visual acuity screening as part of a routine physical

A physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner may delegate other duties to the MA, as enumerated in the 2003 Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Program's "Standards and Guidelines for an Accredited Educational Program for the Medical Assistant," Section (2)(A)(5)(a through c).

Do I need to provide the Board with documentation of my medical assistant's training?

No. The Board does not regulate medical assistants and does not require documentation of training. However, if a complaint is filed against you and involves care rendered by your medical assistant, you may be asked to prove the medical assistant was appropriately trained.

Do the medical assistant training requirements pertain to all medical assistants?

No. Medical assistants, prior to February 2000, directly supervised by the same physician, group of physicians, or physician assistant for at least 2000 hours are not required to fulfill the training requirements. Other exemptions apply—see *R4-16-401* for more information.

What does "direct supervision" of a medical assistant mean?

Direct supervision, as defined in statute, means that a physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner is within the same room or office suite as the medical assistant in order to be available for consultation regarding those tasks the medical assistant performs. (A.R.S. § 32-1401(8))

Do medical assistants need to be certified?

No. Medical assistants are not licensed in Arizona and certification is not required. (To become certified, a medical assistant must successfully pass a certification examination.)

MA Training

In order to work as a medical assistant, a person must complete an approved training program. This is a program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES), a medical assisting program accredited by any accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education, or a medical assisting program designed and offered by a licensed allopathic physician, that meets or exceeds any of these three accrediting programs, and verifies the entry level competencies of a medical assistant.

Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs
www.caahep.org

Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools
www.abhes.org

United States Department of Education
www.ed.gov

It is up to the physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner employing the medical assistant to verify that all training requirements are met. An MA does not need to provide the Board with a certificate of completion as the Board does not provide any information verifying training completion.

* Please note the procedures an MA may perform under the supervision of an osteopathic physician (DO) are different and questions regarding the procedures performed under a DO should be referred to the Osteopathic Board