

Professional Organizations

SEVERAL PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS provide membership benefits to medical assistants. Some provide accreditation. Others provide job placement services. Also, some provide the opportunity for continuing education. Professional organizations may provide educational grants and scholarships to help finance your tuition. Membership can create opportunities for you to advocate for your career interests and share your voice in local, state, and national forums.



Objectives:



1. Define terms associated with professional organization and development.
2. Identify professional organizations that serve medical assistants and medical assistant students.
3. Describe the benefits of professional organization membership.

Key Terms:



AAMA
ABHES
accredit
AMT

AMTIE
CAAHEP
CE
certification

CEUs
CMA
RMA

Professional Terms

Organizations **accredit**, or recognize, educational institutions that maintain standards to qualify graduates for professional practice. **Certification** is a voluntary process that a medical assistant seeks by pursuing specialized training. To be certified, a medical assistant is evaluated and recognized as having met a certain standard of knowledge and skills.

Continuing education (**CE**) is typically required on an annual basis by the state to maintain licensure. **CEUs** are continuing education units, similar to credit hours. A **CMA** is a certified medical assistant. The designation CMA is awarded to a medical assistant who has graduated from a CAAHEP or ABHES accredited program and has passed the Certified Medical Assistant Exam of the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA).

An **RMA** is a registered medical assistant. The designation RMA indicates that a medical assistant has graduated from a CAAHEP or ABHES accredited program and has passed the Registered Medical Assistant Exam of the American Medical Technologists (AMT).



FIGURE 1. These are some basic tools of the clinical medical assistant.

Medical Assistant Professional Organizations

Professional organizations serve the medical assistant field in many ways. For example, some are involved in program accreditation. Others are involved in certification of medical assistants. Most offer information on careers, and many offer professional development and continuing education opportunities.

ACCREDITING AGENCIES

The Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (**ABHES**) is a private, nonprofit agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education. ABHES was established in 1968. It is involved in the accreditation of medical assistants, medical laboratory technicians, and surgical technology allied health programs.

The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (**CAAHEP**) is involved in the accreditation of allied health and health science programs. CAAHEP is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and accredits more than 2,000 educational programs in 23 health science occupations.



ON THE JOB...

CAREER CONNECTION: The Importance of Accreditation

The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs prints testimonials about the importance of school accreditation from educators in the medical assistant industry.

Holly Elliott, an RMA and Program Chair of the Medical Assistant Certificate Program at Cincinnati State Technical and Community College wrote that students who graduate from the program are “automatically qualified to sit for the AAMA exam and become CMAs. Because we are a CAAHEP accredited program, we are constantly seeking to improve and enhance our program to stay in compliance with the high standards set by CAAHEP. Employers in our community know we are training our students to CAAHEP standards and that makes our students the most in demand group of graduates in our area.”

You will find it much easier to find a qualified school, knowing that you can depend on the quality of schools that have been accredited. You will more thoroughly be able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of programs.

CERTIFYING AGENCIES

The American Association of Medical Assistants (**AAMA**) was founded in 1956. It awards certification for medical assistants (CMAs). The American Medical Technologists (**AMT**) is a nationally and internationally recognized nonprofit certification agency. It is a professional membership society established in 1939. AMT offers certification opportunities to medical assistants, medical technologists, medical lab assistants, phlebotomy technicians, and other allied health professionals.

CONTINUING EDUCATION AGENCY

The AMT Institute for Education (**AMTIE**) is an agency for professional development. It is a separate nonprofit agency established by AMT in 1979 to assist AMT-certified members in maintaining their professional competence through continuing education.

Membership Benefits

Membership in professional organizations has many benefits. It is a reliable source of career information. Generally, professional organizations offer continuing education and professional development opportunities. In addition, membership can help you remain current with medical assistant duties, responsibilities, and continuing education requirements.

Some professional organizations offer job placement services, links to job opportunities, and job referral services. You will benefit from discounts on insurance, travel, and products. Pro-

professional journals, periodicals, and newsletters will provide you with information and discounts on conferences, seminars, and workshops.

Membership can present networking and publishing opportunities. Some organizations offer funding or opportunities for grants and scholarships. In addition, professional associations often provide input into local, state, and national issues related to medical careers. They offer opportunities for legislative leadership and advocacy. Also, organization journals, periodicals, and newsletters may feature business advertising.



FIGURE 2. Medical journals, periodicals, and newsletters can show you ways to participate in your profession.

Summary:



Professional organizations accredit teaching institutions, holding them to high academic standards. Also, they provide continuing education for medical assistants, enabling them to become certified as CMAs and registered as RMAs.

The Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) accredits health programs that include medical assistants, medical laboratory technicians, and surgical technologists. The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) is involved in the accreditation of allied health science programs and is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Certified medical assistants (CMAs) are certified by the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) and the American Medical Technologists (AMT). Membership in professional organizations can provide job placement services, offer you opportunities for grants and scholarships, and provide subscriptions to professional journals, periodicals, and newsletters that will help keep you informed about local, state, and national issues related to your career.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. Explain why accreditation and certification are important to your career.
2. How does a medical assistant become a CMA or RMA, and what are the benefits?
3. How can the AMTIE help you increase your income and professional status?
4. List five benefits of professional organization membership.

5. What can you learn from professional medical journals, periodicals, and newsletters?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



The following professional organizations accredit programs and certify individuals. Check out their websites to see how they vary and which can help you begin your medical assistant career. Create a chart to show what they offer.

- ◆ The American Medical Technologist (<http://www.amt1.com>)
- ◆ American Association of Medical Assistants (<http://www.aama-nti.org>)
- ◆ Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (<http://www.abhes.org>)
- ◆ Commission Accreditation of Health Education Programs (<http://www.caahep.org>)
- ◆ The American Medical Technologists Institute for Education (<http://www.amt1.com>)

Web Links:



Law and Medical Ethics

<http://depts.washington.edu/bioethx/topics/law.html>

Medical Assistant Network

<http://www.medicalassistant.net/ceu.htm>

Medical Ethics

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/medical-ethics.page>