

THE JOB C E N T E R

Where/how
to get training

Schooling

High school students interested in becoming medical assistants should take courses in algebra, English, and science, especially biology and chemistry. Good office skills, especially computer knowledge, are essential.

Formal programs in medical assisting are offered by business and vocational schools as well as community colleges. Most one-year programs lead to a certificate, and an associate degree can be obtained by completing a program that lasts 18 months or two years.

All programs of study include anatomy and physiology, CPR and first aid, and medical terminology as well as accounting, medical transcription, and computer keyboarding.

Students learn laboratory techniques, clinical procedures, and medication administration. They also study office practices, patient relations, ethics, and medical law.


Certification

Applicants who meet certain educational and experience requirements and pass an exam are awarded the title Certified Medical Assistant by the American Association of Medical Assistants. Another certification, Registered Medical Assistant, is awarded by the American Medical Technologists. Additional certification may be required for performing certain medical procedures.

Financial Aid

Grants, scholarships, loans, and work/study programs are available for college students. For most of this aid, high school seniors must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, which is available from high school guidance offices and higher education financial aid offices.

For more information on federal financial aid programs, or to apply electronically, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.ed.gov>.


For more
information
on federal
financial aid
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At the doctor's office, there's no such thing as a simple visit. Continual changes in technology and insurance regulations mean that doctors need specially trained assistants to make the treatment process go smoothly.

Medical assistants are important members of a health-care team. Their tasks are divided into two areas, administrative and clerical. If the office, clinic, or lab where they work is small, they might perform tasks in both areas.

Administrative duties often include scheduling appointments, processing the mail, and maintaining files. Medical assistants also manage patient information and arrange diagnostic services with other physicians, labs, or hospitals.

Another administrative task is managing patients' accounts, including billing, taking payments, and filling out forms for insurance companies or government agencies.

The clinical work that assistants perform varies according to state law but may include interviewing patients and recording their medical histories, determining vital signs, and assisting the doctor during examinations.

Medical assistants also prepare laboratory specimens and conduct basic lab tests on the premises. They may also administer electrocardiograms, give injections, remove sutures, and help with minor surgery.

Assistants who work for specialists have specialized duties. An ophthalmic assistant, for example, would give eye tests and show patients how to use contact lenses, protective shields, and medication.



The clinical and administrative duties performed by medical assistants enable a team of health-care providers to function smoothly.

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Q: What is the best way for a trained medical assistant to get a job?

A: The first step should be the placement office at the school that provided the medical assisting program. Job seekers should also contact the local medical society and the American Association of Medical Assistants and the American Medical Technologists.

Q: Do medical assistants have many opportunities for advancement?

A: The widely accepted use of cross-training in the medical field provides an excellent opportunity for medical assistants to continue their studies and training in related fields, such as nursing or medical technology.

Jobs in this field

Resources

Book:

Delmar's Comprehensive Medical Assisting: Administrative and Clinical Competencies
by
Wilburta Lindh,
Marilyn Pooler,
Carol Tamparo,
and Jo Cerrato

Job titles	Place of work	Kind of work	Salary range*
Medical assistant	Physician's office, laboratory, or clinic	Perform administrative tasks such as recordkeeping and billing, or clinical duties that include lab work and explaining treatment procedures to patients.	\$17,500-\$25,800

Skills required

Medical assistants must have good communication skills and be attentive to detail.

Future job opportunities

The job outlook for medical assistants is promising. The number of physicians is increasing, and operating a medical practice is getting more complex, so medical assistants will be in high demand.

What you wear

Medical assistants wear clothing typically found in a physician's office or clinic: surgical scrubs or perhaps everyday dress clothing covered by a lab coat.

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Want to know more?

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