



COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION of New York State

NYS Must Increase Utilization of Medical Assistants to Address Workforce Shortages

February 2022

Who are Medical Assistants?

Medical Assistants (MAs) are individuals who are cross trained to perform both administrative and clinical duties to work alongside physicians, midlevel, and administrative staff in outpatient or ambulatory care facilities. Many MAs, in NY and across the country, are trained in credentialed programs and take national certifying exams. MAs are highly utilized by community health centers (CHCs) and 48 states (excluding New York State and Connecticut) recognize certified MAs and allow them to practice at the top of their training.

Medical Assistants are currently underutilized in New York State.

Currently, New York State is one of two states that does not have any formal recognition for MAs. Although a national credentialing standard exists for MAs, the NYS Education Department (NYSED) does not recognize this certification. Current NYS guidance states that unlicensed persons, including MAs, can perform very limited tasks under supervision of a physician. In other states, certified MAs are recognized and perform tasks as they are trained, such as providing injections and administering vaccines under supervision of physicians, nurse practitioners or physician assistants.

Recognition of certified Medical Assistants can help alleviate the current health workforce shortages.

- Many MAs are already trained to give injections and vaccinations. They could be quickly trained and folded into existing vaccination efforts at CHCs and other healthcare providers.
- Allowing MAs to provide vaccinations will relieve pressures on nurses and other clinical staff and allow them to operate at the top of their license.
- CHCs hire staff from the communities they serve. Recognizing certified MAs would lead to increased hiring of MAs from their communities and increased economic opportunity in those communities.

The Medical Assistant profession has fewer barriers to entry compared to other professions such as nursing.

- MA certification programs only require applicants to have a high school diploma or equivalency, are low cost, and are short in length. This results in a trained and certified workforce that can be employed in the field in under a year.
- Some programs provide career pathways to additional education for their former MA students (i.e. a branch to an LPN training program), leading to higher level career opportunities.

CHCANYS strongly recommends New York State to:

- Recognize MAs and allow them to practice at the top of their training, including injecting and immunizing, by enacting a law that establishes a pathway for certification; and
- Invest in training programs to promote best practices in MA training and certification and expand those programs in partnership with CHCs across the state, with facilitation by CHCANYS.

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