

NYS Must Increase Utilization of Medical Assistants to Address Workforce Shortages

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CHCANYS strongly recommends New York State:

- Recognize certified 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.

Who are Medical Assistants?

Medical Assistants (MAs) are individuals trained to perform both administrative and clinical duties to work alongside other health care practitioners in outpatient or ambulatory care facilities. Many MAs are trained in credentialed programs and take national certifying exams. MAs are highly utilized by community health centers (CHCs) and 49 states (excluding New York State) recognize certified MAs.

Medical Assistants are underutilized in New York State.

New York State is the only state that does not have any formal recognition for MAs, despite a national credentialing standard. 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 allowed to provide injections and administer vaccines under supervision of physicians, nurse practitioners or physician assistants.

Certified Medical Assistants can help alleviate the current health workforce shortages.

- Other states allow certified MAs to give injections and vaccinations. Certified MAs can be trained and integrated into existing vaccination efforts at CHCs and other healthcare providers.
- 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.

Medical Assistants can be an entry point into a healthcare career ladder.

- 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 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.