

Medical Assistants in New York State

JUNE 2023

What is a Medical Assistant?

Medical Assistants (MAs) are critical members of a primary care team; they perform administrative and certain clinical duties under the direction of a physician.¹ MAs operate in a range of settings and play varied roles depending on the provider type, practice size, and geography. They are often members of the communities they serve, so MAs are uniquely positioned to build relationships with and earn the trust of their patients, particularly patients of color and those from other historically marginalized groups. The profession is **expected to grow in New York State by 27%** between 2020 and 2030, much faster than other health care occupations.²

What do Medical Assistants do?

The permitted tasks and roles of an MA vary by state. The chart below shows select allowable and prohibited duties in New York State. See a detailed list [here](#).

What Tasks Can MAs Perform in New York State?	
Select Allowable Tasks ^{3,4}	Select Prohibited Tasks ⁵
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducting patient intake, including medical histories• Measuring vital signs• Preparing patients for exams• Acting as a scribe• Conducting billing and coding• Scheduling appointments• Collecting and preparing laboratory specimens• Administering electrocardiograms (EKG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drawing up or administering vaccinations• Drawing up or administering medications• Taking X-rays• Inserting or removing IVs or catheters• First-assisting in surgical procedures• Relaying positive test results to patients



During the pandemic, New York State allowed MAs to perform COVID-19 tests, but not vaccinations.⁶ States including New Jersey and Connecticut allowed MAs to administer both COVID-19 tests and vaccinations during the public health emergency and subsequently made administering vaccines an official permitted task for an MA.^{7,8}

What training and licensure do MAs have?

MAs are not required to get a specific license or certification; however, many of them enroll in training and education programs, which vary from state to state. In New York State:

- There are no standard education requirements beyond a minimum of a high school diploma or its equivalent.⁹
- Some MAs receive certification to become Certified Medical Assistants (CMAs). New York State recognizes two national certifications for CMAs: the American Association of Medical Assistants and the National Healthcareer Association. In New York, all MAs—including CMAs—are considered unlicensed.^{10,11}
- MA certificate programs typically take 6 months to 2 years to complete. They often include training in administrative practices and procedures; laboratory and diagnostic procedures; standards and regulations; infection control; and medical terminology and patient communication.¹²
- Programs also may require supervised clinical experience.¹³

What do we know about MAs in New York State?

- **35,720 MAs are employed in New York State**, the 4th highest number in any state.¹⁴
- **38 years old is the average age** of MAs.¹⁵
- **\$45,816 is the median salary** of MAs in New York State.¹⁶
- MAs are primarily people of color (*see table 1*). Close to 85% are women.¹⁷
- Three-quarters of MAs practice in outpatient practices (*see table 2*).

Table 1.
Race/Ethnicity of MAs in New York State*¹⁸

	Percentage (%)
White	36.0%
Black	21.0%
Asian	8.1%
Two or more races	9.9%
Other race	25.0%
Hispanic	38.4%

* Race and ethnicity categories are not mutually exclusive.

Table 2.
Settings Where MAs Work in New York State

	Percentage (%)
Offices of Physicians	63.3%
Outpatient Care Centers	6.1%
Offices of Other Health Practitioners	6.6%
Hospitals	13.2%
Other Settings*	10.8%

* Other settings: colleges and universities, employment services, office administrative services, settings unspecified

What can be done to strengthen the MA workforce?

The New York Health Foundation (NYHealth) envisions an enhanced, integrated role for MAs in primary care teams in New York. Elevating the role of MAs could improve health outcomes, reduce clinician strain, and support equitable career advancement. MAs can take on additional responsibilities in areas such as care coordination, patient navigation, patient education, and disease management. An example of enhanced MA responsibilities is an MA serving as a “health coach” for patients experiencing chronic health issues. Providers that have used this model observed improved health outcomes for patients with lower incomes and for patients who speak a different language than their care provider.¹⁹ These and other team-based care models are an important part of shifting payment for primary care toward value-based arrangements.

A step toward achieving that vision is developing a better understanding of MAs’ current role and identifying team-based care models for replication, barriers to career advancement, and topics for further inquiry. More data are needed. With NYHealth support, the [New York Alliance for Careers in Healthcare](#) is now assessing the characteristics and varied roles of MAs in primary care practices across New York State.

See the full list of references [here](#).

Learn more about the Foundation’s work on primary care, including workforce development, [here](#).