



Medical Assistant



Diploma & Associate of Applied Science Degrees Available

Student Information Handbook

Luverne Educational Center for Health Careers

Minnesota West Community & Technical College
Medical Assistant Program
Diploma & Associate of Applied Science Degree

The material contained in this handbook is an introduction to the career of a medical assistant and the Medical Assistant program at Minnesota West Community and Technical College – Luverne Center. Minnesota West designed this material to inform counselors, teachers, and prospective students, so that they may make decisions about whether to enroll in the Minnesota West Medical Assistant program. The handbook is also intended for current students to reference information, including policies about grading and practicum placement. Additional copies of the handbook and information about enrolling in the program may be obtained from the following address:

Minnesota West Community and Technical College
Medical Assistant Program
P.O. Box 250
Pipestone, MN 56164
1-800-658-2330

WHAT DOES A MEDICAL ASSISTANT DO?

Medical Assistants are allied health professionals who assist physicians in ambulatory care settings such as clinics and medical offices. Medical Assistants perform both administrative duties and clinical duties. Administrative duties may include scheduling and receiving patients, preparing and maintaining medical records, performing basic clerical skills, handling telephone calls and writing correspondence, serving as a liaison between the provider and other individuals, and managing practice finances. Clinical duties may include asepsis and infection control, taking patient histories and vital signs, performing first aid and CPR, preparing patients for procedures, assisting the provider with examinations and treatments, collecting and processing specimens, performing selected diagnostic tests, and preparing and administering medications as directed by the provider.

WHAT CAREERS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE FIELD OF MEDICAL ASSISTING?

More medical assistants are employed by practicing physicians, physician’s assistants and certified nurse practitioners than any other type of allied health personnel. Medical assistants are usually employed in clinic settings, where they perform a variety of administrative and clinical tasks to facilitate the work of the provider. The responsibilities of medical assistants vary depending on whether they work in a clinic, hospital, large group practice, or small private office. With a demand from more than 200,000 physicians, there are, and will probably continue to be, almost unlimited opportunities for formally educated medical assistants. The 2023 data from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development states the median wages for MA’s are:

Minnesota:	\$23.96/hour
Southwest Minnesota:	\$22.25/hour
U.S.:	\$19.23/hour

WHERE DO MEDICAL ASSISTANTS WORK?

Medical Assistants are most often employed in medical clinics, large or small, privately owned or group practices. For more information, inquiries can be addressed to:

American Association of Medical Assistants
20 N Wacker Drive, Suite 1575
Chicago, IL 60606-2903
Phone: 800-228-2262
www.aama-ntl.org

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MEDICAL ASSISTANT PROGRAM

To enter the Medical Assistant Program (Diploma or Associate of Applied Science Degree) at Minnesota West, you must be a high school graduate or the equivalent. If you have not graduated from high school, contact your local high school and find out how you can obtain the equivalent of a high school education through the Graduate Equivalent Degree (GED) Program or pass the Ability to Benefit Test. High school students may enroll under the PSEO Program.

Before or after acceptance into the program, all students will be required to take the Accuplacer test. This test assesses skills in math, reading, and writing. Results of the tests will be used to advise students on course placement.

Completing the Medical Assistant program is sometimes difficult for the student with less than average grades. Those students who struggled with difficult classes in high school may also struggle with courses in the Medical Assistant program. Developmental course work can often increase the possibility of success. Students whose primary language is not English should have additional advising from the Student Services Department. Testing can be done to determine if the student has adequate reading, writing, and listening skills needed to meet the academic requirements of the Medical Assistant program. Students who enter the Medical Assisting program must be ready to spend a great deal of time preparing for classes each day. Students who have had poor study habits must realize this and be ready to change these habits, or success will be difficult to achieve. The course of study for healthcare professions is often difficult and time-consuming. However, the rewards of serving patients, meeting their needs in times of illness or preventing health problems, will compensate the graduate for the time and effort put into the training program. Part-time program options are available through consultation and advising with the Program Director.

Please refer to the current Minnesota West Student Handbook available at www.mnwest.edu for further information concerning admission policies and procedures.

PERSONAL QUALITIES A MEDICAL ASSISTANT SHOULD HAVE

Deciding on a career is often difficult. Some qualities that many health professionals have which might assist you to assess your readiness for the career include the following:

1. An interest in science and mathematics -- If you have liked the biology and chemistry courses you have taken in high school or other schools, and if you enjoy working in the lab sections of those courses, you may be suited for a health care career.
2. Ability to work accurately -- You must be able to follow a set of instructions in detail and be precise in your tests and measures. You must work in a way that produces the right result, or the life and well-being of the patient may be adversely affected.
3. Ability to cooperate with others -- People who work in a clinic must work well as a team to make sure the patient is given the best treatment possible. It is not wise for the workers in a clinic to be working in different directions. They must all work for the same cause, the patient.
4. Integrity and reliability -- You must be honest, trustworthy, and reliable in your work.
5. Manual dexterity -- You need to be good with small movements with your hands. You will be working with fragile equipment in both the administrative and clinical environment.
6. Mental stability -- The clinic can be a stressful place to work. Tests must be done quickly and you must maintain accuracy. You must be able to hold up under pressure. The excitable person who panics in an emergency may have trouble in the clinical portion of this career.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

The Minnesota West Community & Technical College Medical Assistant, Diploma and A.A.S. program faculty have specified the following nonacademic criteria (technical standards) which all applicants are expected to meet in order to participate in the Medical Assistant program and professional practice.

Observation: The applicant must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients in order to elicit information, describe changes in mood, activity and posture; assess non-verbal communication; and be able to effectively transmit information to patients, fellow students, faculty and staff, and all members of the health care team.

Motor: The applicant must have sufficient motor function to elicit information from patients by appropriate diagnostic or therapeutic maneuvers; be able to perform basic tests; possess all skills necessary to carry out diagnostic or therapeutic procedures; be able to interpret movements reasonably required to provide general care and emergency treatment to patients.

Intellectual/Conceptual Integrative and Quantitative Abilities: The applicant must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize. Problem solving, the critical skill demanded of the allied health practitioner, requires all of these intellectual abilities. In addition, the applicant must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and understand the spatial relationships of structures.

Behavioral and Social Attributes: The applicant must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of the applicant's intellectual abilities; the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to care of patients; and the development of mature, sensitive and effective relationships with patients. Applicants must also be able to tolerate taxing workloads, function effectively under stress, adapt to changing environment, display flexibility, and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in clinical problems of many patients. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interest and motivation are personal qualities which each applicant should possess.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

The following core performance standards are provided to assist each student in determining whether he or she can perform in an allied health program. Each of these standards is reflected in course objectives and provides an objective measure for students and advisors to make informed decisions regarding whether the student is qualified to meet the requirements of the program.

If a student believes that he or she cannot meet one or more of the standards without accommodations or modifications, the specific program will determine, on an individual basis, whether or not the necessary accommodations or modifications can be made reasonably.

1. Critical thinking ability sufficient for clinical judgment.
2. Interpersonal abilities sufficient to interact with individuals, families, and groups from a variety of social, emotional, cultural, and intellectual backgrounds.
3. Communication abilities sufficient for interaction with others in verbal and written form.
4. Physical abilities sufficient to move from room to room and maneuver in small places.
5. Gross and fine motor abilities sufficient to provide safe and effective care to patients.
6. Auditory abilities sufficient to monitor and assess health needs.
7. Visual ability sufficient for observation and assessment necessary in an allied health program.
8. Tactile ability sufficient for physical assessment.

Upon Graduation and initial employment, the medical assistant should be able to demonstrate entry-level competency in these areas of professional practice.

OCCUPATIONAL RISKS

Medical Assisting is a profession with many rewards, as practitioners can perform both administrative and clinical services, filling several roles in a variety of healthcare environments. The Bureau of Labor Statistics clearly outlines that it is a growth field, with an anticipated 18% growth from 2020 to 2030.

Medical Assistants work directly with providers and patients, with the goal of providing healthcare and ensuring patient safety. It is a position with a great deal of responsibility. As with any healthcare position, there are certain occupational risks that come into play with being a medical assistant, and those hazards include the following:

- Exposure to infectious diseases
- Sharps injuries
- Bloodborne pathogens and biological hazards
- Chemical and drug exposure
- Ergonomic hazards from lifting, sitting, and repetitive tasks
- Latex allergies
- Stress

At the same time, there are protections set up with the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), and those protections are particularly important within a healthcare environment. OSHA has a series of standards that protect the safety of healthcare workers and patients. Accredited medical assisting programs are required to teach students about the hazards that they face on the job and the protocols that can be put into place to ensure a workplace culture that prioritizes safety

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

It is the philosophy of Minnesota West Community & Technical College to provide learning experiences that will enable the student to develop his/her whole being to the maximum of his/her ability. This basic philosophy, as applied to the Medical Assistant program, is to provide learning experiences for students so they will be able to obtain certification and use their knowledge and skills to function as a contributing member of the health care team. The program addresses the needs of the surrounding medical community and prepares graduates to meet the technical, academic, and special needs as defined by the service area.

STATEMENT OF PROGRAM GOALS AND EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Goal:

To prepare medical assistants who are competent in the cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills), and affective (behavior) learning domains to enter the profession.”

Expected Learning Outcomes:

The expected learning outcomes for medical assistants graduating from Minnesota West Community & Technical College are identified in the **Core Curriculum for Medical Assistants – Medical Assisting Education Review Board (MAERB) – 2022 Curriculum Requirements**.

These may be found at the following link, pages 12-25:

<https://www.maerb.org/Portals/0/Documents/Standards%20and%20Guidelines,%202022.pdf>

See syllabi of program courses to identify where the specific outcomes are taught.

PROGRAM OPTIONS

The Medical Assistant Program offers a Diploma (44 credits) or an A.A.S. Degree (60 credits).

The A.A.S. students will take the same course work as the Diploma students with the exception of the general education courses. The students may take the general education courses prior to the beginning of the fall semester or they may take a few general education courses during the program or after the Medical Assistant course work is completed. The A.A.S. degree is not a requirement, and both Diploma and A.A.S. graduates are eligible to take the AAMA Certification Exam.

MEDICAL ASSISTANT, DIPLOMA (44 credits)

Fall - Diploma Track		Credits
ADSM 1120	Medical Office Procedures	4
BIOL 2245	Medical Terminology OR	
HC 1180	Medical Terminology in Healthcare	2
ENGL 1101	Composition I	3
HC 1151	Body Structure and Function	3
HC1290	Healthcare & Society	1
MDLT 1100	Introduction to Laboratory Sciences	3
MEDA 1105	Clinical Procedures I	3
Total Credits for Fall		19
STSK 0091	Basic Math (if needed)	(1)
Spring - Diploma Track		Credits
ADSM1200	Introduction to Medical Coding, Billing & Insurance	3
EMS 1112	AHA CPR Healthcare Provider, AED First Aid Certification	1
HC1100	Nutrition	1
HC 2120	Disease Conditions	3
MEDA 1135	Laboratory Skills	3
MEDA 2110	Clinical Procedures II	4
MEDA 2135	Pharmacology	3
Total Credits for Spring		18
Mayterm/Summer - Diploma Track		Credits
MEDA2139	Professional Integration	1
MEDA2140	MA Practicum	6
Total Credits for Mayterm/Summer		7
Total Credits for Diploma Track		44

MEDICAL ASSISTANT, A.A.S. (60 credits)

General Education Requirements – AAS Track

(These may be taken before during or after the program requirements)

		Credits
BIOL 1110	Principles of Biology	4
	OR	
BIOL 1115	Human Biology	3
PSYC 1150	Lifespan Developmental Psychology	3
SOC 1101	Introduction to Sociology	3
	Humanities Elective (Recommend PHIL 2101)	3
	General Education Electives	3 – 4
	Total General Education Requirements	16

Fall - AAS Track

		Credits
ADSM 1120	Medical Office Procedures	4
BIOL 2245	Medical Terminology OR	
HC 1180	Medical Terminology in Healthcare	2
HC1290	Healthcare & Society	1
ENGL 1101	Composition I	3
HC 1151	Body Structure and Function	3
MDLT 1100	Introduction to Laboratory Sciences	3
MEDA 1105	Clinical Procedures I	3
	Total Credits for Fall	19
STSK 0091	Basic Math (if needed)	(1)

Spring – AAS Track

		Credits
ADSM1200	Introduction to Medical Coding, Billing & Insurance	3
EMS 1112	AHA CPR Healthcare Provider, AED First Aid Certification	1
HC1100	Nutrition	1
HC 2120	Disease Conditions	3
MEDA 1135	Laboratory Skills	3
MEDA 2110	Clinical Procedures II	4
MEDA 2135	Pharmacology	3
	Total Credits for Spring	18

Mayterm/Summer – AAS Track

		Credits
MEDA2139	Professional Integration	1
MEDA 2140	MA Practicum	6
	Total Credits for AAS Track	60

The final semester is spent in a clinical experience at one of our practicum sites. Students may select one of our established practicum sites or they may request a site of his/her choice.

CAN A STUDENT START AT ANY TIME DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR?

A student can begin the program at the beginning of any semester and take any of the general studies or general education requirements of the program. Once the student has started taking the medical assisting course work, there are prerequisite requirements that must be followed in progressing through the program.

CAN A STUDENT TAKE LONGER THAN TWO YEARS TO COMPLETE THE PROGRAM?

We encourage students to complete the program in 3 years because the retention of the material presented before the practicum will be greater. Students who choose to complete the program on a part-time basis are encouraged to follow a plan determined in a meeting between the student and their advisor. If the student chooses the A.A.S. track, the general education classes can be added to this plan as desired.

GRADING POLICY

Grades are obtained by several means in the Medical Assistant Program. Methods of assessment vary from course to course within the program and may include applicable assignments, performance exams and work products to assess psychomotor and affective competencies, quizzes, unit tests, midterm and final exams. Individual instructors determine how to assign points to each assessment and the manner in which percentages correspond to a letter grade. The method for determining the final grade in each course will be explained by the instructor in the course syllabus, made available to students when they begin the course.

1. Students must obtain a "C" or higher grade in all Medical Assistant program courses in order to complete the program. If a student receives a letter grade of a "C-", "D" or "F" in a course, they must retake the course.
2. Some courses have identified prerequisites, so if a student does not receive at least a "C" in a course, they may not be able to progress in the program. For example, if a student receives a "C-" or lower in Clinical Procedures I, they may not take Clinical Procedures II.
3. If a student receives a grade of "C-", "D" or "F" for any MA course on **TWO** occasions, or for any **TWO** MA courses, the student will not be eligible to continue in the Medical Assistant Program.
4. Students must pass all MA program courses with a "C" before going out into practicum.
5. MA students pursuing an AAS degree must obtain a "C" or better grade in all general education courses.
6. A student does have the right to appeal the process described above.

EVALUATION OF PSYCHOMOTOR AND AFFECTIVE COMPETENCIES

Medical assistant program courses that assess the psychomotor and affective competencies use performance exams and work products to determine successful completion of these competencies. Performance exams must meet the criteria specified on the Performance Evaluation Check-off sheets. If performance does not meet the criteria on the first attempt, a second attempt is granted. However, the student receives the points from the first attempt toward their grade; the second attempt is “pass” or “fail”. Should the student fail the second attempt, this will be grounds for failure of the class. If the second attempt of a skill is failed, but the student’s grade percentage at the end of the semester is a “C” or better, the grade will be lowered to a “C-”, meaning that the course must be successfully retaken in order to progress in the program. Work products completed to assess competencies must receive a letter grade of “C” or better to be considered successfully completed.

****Students must successfully pass all psychomotor and affective competencies in each program course in order to graduate.****

FINAL EVALUATION OF COGNITIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT EXAM

After completion of the Medical Assistant Practicum, the student must complete a “Mock Certification Exam”, and achieve a minimum of 70% on it. The purpose of this is to help prepare the student for the actual CMA (AAMA) exam and to meet accreditation assessment requirements for the cognitive learning outcomes. A date is set aside for this to be taken at Minnesota West. If a student does not complete this exam or does not achieve at least a 70% on this exam, they will be given the opportunity to remediate and take the exam again. This exam may be taken a maximum of 3 times. Students not passing this requirement will receive an “Incomplete” for the course MEDA2140 – MA Practicum, and will not be able to graduate.

PRACTICUM

NOTE: Prior to the practicum experience, all medical assistant students will complete a background check through the Minnesota Department of Health. If the completed background check prohibits the student from providing direct care to patients, the student will not be able to complete the practicum, and thus cannot complete the MA Program.

The student is given an opportunity to express his or her choice of affiliates for the practicum experience. It is either the decision of the program director as to which student is assigned to which clinic for the practicum experience, or the clinic may choose by interviewing the student. Students do not always get their exact choice of clinical sites; however, some arrangement acceptable to all can usually be made.

The practicum includes 270 hours at an affiliated clinic where the student rotates through the major clinical and administrative departments. It is an opportunity to practice the skills learned in the previous semesters of theory and lab. All course work must be completed before entering practicum.

The date of application will determine the priority of the student for practicum. For example, if there are 12 affiliated clinical sites, then those 12 students with the earliest dates of application will be placed first. However, we will work with students with specific requests. The Program Director attempts to honor these requests if at all possible. If the number of students admitted exceeds the number that can be accommodated in the practicum experience, there will be an alternate list for those not placed. As places become available, students on the list are given preference for clinical assignments, again by date of application.

All students will be informed of their status on the day of orientation or they may call the Program Director to inquire about their current status.

The practicum is regarded as a portion of your education. Therefore, tuition is paid as it would be for any other course in the program. Some other professions and apprenticeships pay a salary to their interns. However, since the clinical experience is considered to be a portion of the education and is not the same as on the job training, the accreditation requirements stipulate that no salary be paid to students in practicum. One person at each affiliate is appointed as the site coordinator who will supervise the practicum. It is this person's responsibility to see to it that you have a truly educational experience, and that you are accomplishing the objectives of the experience.

During the practicum each student is assigned to rotate through the administrative and clinical departments of the clinic. The students keep a daily journal of each day's activities and accomplishments. They are also assigned to complete reviews and quizzes that will help to prepare them for the certification exam. The student journal and the clinical evaluations, completed by each department within the practicum facility, contribute points towards the final practicum grade.

The practicum coordinator will visit the student at least once at the affiliated clinic. Regular contact is made via phone, fax or e-mail.

CMA (AAMA) EXAM

Minnesota West received its initial accreditation on April 22, 1999 from the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). Continuing accreditation was awarded on March 16, 2007 and again on September 16, 2016. The program will have its next comprehensive evaluation no later than Fall 2025. Graduates from accredited programs are eligible to take the AAMA (American Association of Medical Assistants) Certification Exam.

Certification is the process by which a non-governmental agency or association grants recognition of competence to an individual who has met certain predetermined qualifications, as specified by that agency or association. Minnesota West will highly recommend that students take this exam, and will assist in preparing the student for the exam during the practicum.

Program Officials and Faculty

MA Program Director: Lisa Smith, RN/BSN,RMA (AMT)

MA Faculty: Lisa Smith, RN/BSN,RMA (AMT)

Rita Miller, Ed.D., MLS (ASCP)

Jessie Wichmann, RN/AAS Degree, CMA(AAMA),

Minnesota West President: Dr. Terry Gaalswyk, Ph.D.

Minnesota West College Provost: Dr. Arthur Brown, Ph.D.

Minnesota West Dean of Allied Health: Jackie Otkin, RN/MSN

Program Accreditation

The Minnesota West Community & Technical College Medical Assisting program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (www.caahep.org) upon the recommendation of the Medical Assisting Education Review Board (MAERB).

Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs

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This material can be provided in alternative format such as large print, Braille, or a tape by calling the Minnesota West Community & Technical College at (800) 658-2330. For TTY Communications call the Minnesota Relay Service at (800) 627-3529.
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