

Medical/Clinical Assistant CIP Code 51.0801

Introduction – Program of Study

Medical assistants perform administrative and clinical tasks to keep the offices of physicians, podiatrists, chiropractors, and other health practitioners running smoothly. They should not be confused with physician assistants, who examine, diagnose, and treat patients under the direct supervision of a physician.

The duties of medical assistants vary from office to office, depending on the location and size of the practice and the practitioner's specialty. Medical assistants who perform administrative tasks have many duties. They update and file patients' medical records, fill out insurance forms, and arrange for hospital admissions and laboratory services. They also perform tasks less specific to medical settings, such as answering telephones, greeting patients, handling correspondence, scheduling appointments, and handling billing and bookkeeping.

For clinical medical assistants, duties vary according to state law. Some common tasks include taking medical histories and recording vital signs, explaining treatment procedures to patients, preparing patients for examinations, and assisting physicians during examinations. Medical assistants collect and prepare laboratory specimens and sometimes perform basic laboratory tests on the premises, dispose of contaminated supplies, and sterilize medical instruments. They may instruct patients about medications and special diets, prepare and administer medications as directed by a physician, authorize drug refills as directed, send prescriptions to a pharmacy, draw blood, prepare patients for x-rays, take electrocardiograms, remove sutures, and change dressings.

Postsecondary medical assisting programs are offered in secondary career and technical centers, postsecondary vocational schools, and community and junior colleges. Programs usually are for one year and result in a certificate or diploma, or two years and result in an associate degree. Courses include anatomy, physiology, medical terminology, keyboarding, transcription, recordkeeping, accounting, and insurance processing. Students learn laboratory techniques, clinical and diagnostic procedures, pharmaceutical principles, the administration of medications, and first aid. They study office practices, patient relations, medical law, and ethics. There are various organizations that accredit medical assisting programs. Accredited programs often include an internship that provides practical experience in physicians' offices, hospitals, or other health care facilities.

Medical assistants deal with the public; therefore, they must be neat and well groomed and have

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a courteous, pleasant manner and they must be able to put patients at ease and explain physicians' instructions. They must respect the confidential nature of medical information.

Assumptions of this Program of Study

High quality programs should meet the following standards:

- 1. Promote positive working relationships.
- 2. Implement a curriculum that fosters all areas of skill development
- 3. Use appropriate and effective teaching approaches.
- 4. Provide ongoing assessments of student progress.
- 5. Employ and support qualified teaching staff.
- 6. Establish and maintain relationships and use resources of the community.
- 7. Provide a safe and healthy learning environment.
- 8. Implement strong program organization and supervision policies that result in high quality teaching and learning.
- 9. Integrate academic skills and aptitudes necessary for postsecondary education, gainful employment and a foundation of lifelong learning.

CIP Code

51.0801 Medical/Clinical Assistant

This is an instructional program that prepares individuals to assist physicians by performing functions related to both administrative and clinical duties of a medical office. Administrative components of instruction include telephone technique, insurance, accounts, reports, medical records, computerized fiscal management, medical transcription and word processing. The clinical aspects of the program provide instruction in examination room techniques, aseptic practices, infection control, care of equipment and supplies, CPR and first aid, laboratory orientation and the use of biomedical equipment. The curriculum includes planned courses in anatomy and physiology, universal precautions and OSHA regulations, medical terminology, medical law and ethics, psychology, communications, introduction to pharmacology, medical assisting skills and clinical practice.

For more information, contact:

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