

# Candidate Handbook

## Medical Assistant Certification

...a complete guide for candidates preparing for MedCA exams



# MedCA

Medical Career Assessments

[www.medca.us](http://www.medca.us)

516-868-6800

# Candidate Handbook

## Medical Assistant Certification

### Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Statement of Purpose.....	4
Target Audience.....	5
Certification.....	5
MedCA’s Vision.....	5
MedCA’s Core Values.....	5
The MedCA Certification Board.....	6
Code of Ethics.....	6
Special Accommodations.....	7
Statement of Nondiscrimination.....	7
MedCA Certification Exams and Registration Fees.....	7
Medical Assistant Certification.....	7
Practice Settings.....	8
The Role of a Medical Assistant.....	8
Candidate Eligibility Requirements.....	8
General Information.....	9
Online Registration.....	9
Cancellation Policy/Refund Policy.....	9
Retaking the Exam.....	9
Exam Information.....	9
Study Material.....	9
Exam Format and Administration.....	9
What to Bring to the Testing Center.....	10

<b>What to Expect at the Testing Site.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Exam Proctor.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>General Testing Guidelines for Paper/Pencil Exams.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>General Testing Guidelines for Online Exams.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Exam Development.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Job Task Analysis (JTA) Study.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Establishment of Exam Blueprints.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Item Development.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Standard Setting/Determining the Passing Score .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Ongoing Development .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Exam Scoring.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Disciplinary Standards and Procedures.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Appeals Policy.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Exam Appeals.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Eligibility Appeals.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Disciplinary Action Appeals.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Confidentiality Policy.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Keeping Certification Current.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Record Retention.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Violation of Exam Procedures.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Credential Use.....</b>	<b>16</b>

# Candidate Handbook

## Medical Assistant Certification

### Introduction

This candidate handbook provides information about:

- MedCA allied health Certification exams and registration fees for the Medical Assistant Certification exam.
- Eligibility requirements for the Medical Assistant Certification exam.
- Applying and sitting for the MedCA Medical Assistant Certification exam.
- What to expect after sitting for the Medical Assistant Certification exam.

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of MEDCA is to provide competency exams to allied health care professionals to enhance and demonstrate the knowledge and professionalism required by employers and patients; protect allied health care professionals' right to practice; and promote effective, efficient health care delivery through optimal use of multiskilled certified health care professionals.

MedCA is headquartered in Freeport, NY. MedCA was established with the vision of enhancing the allied healthcare industry by providing Certification exams that validate the knowledge of professionals in this field. In support of these goals, MedCA developed the Medical Assistant Certification, which has been administered to over 1,000 candidates to date. Medical Assistants are medical professionals who perform administrative and clinical tasks to assist physicians in providing patient care. The Medical Assistant Certification exam provides the public and employers with assurance that a Medical Assistant Certificant has the knowledge to perform those tasks, including drawing blood, taking vitals, taking a patient history and respecting patient confidentiality. Additionally, MedCA collaborates and actively participates in the allied healthcare industry to serve as a support network for allied healthcare professionals. MedCA has obtained membership in various organizations to strengthen its ties to the industry.

MedCA creates and distributes Certification exams to the allied healthcare industry through schools; the candidates that are being trained as Medical Assistants are our specific target audience. The purpose of the Medical Assistant Certification exam is to verify that each successful exam candidate has proven that they are knowledgeable in the following domains:

- Pharmacology
- Medical Procedures
- Patient Care
- Phlebotomy

- EKG
- Other Diagnostic Tests
- Law and Ethics
- Administrative Duties

These areas of knowledge make up the content framework for the MedCA Medical Assistant Certification exam. It is through a set of standards that MedCA has developed each of its exams. The Medical Assistant Certification demonstrates an individual's minimum competency in his/her professional job role.

Each Medical Assistant exam is developed by a team of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who have years of experience in their chosen field.

### **Target Audience**

The target audience for the MedCA Medical Assistant certification is entry-level medical professionals who perform routine administrative and clinical tasks in various practice settings under the direction of a physician, a physician's assistant and/or a nurse.

### **Certification**

Certification is a voluntary process designed to establish that a person has met professional standards of education, training and experience. A Certification attests to the fact that the person has met the standards of a credentialing organization and is entitled to make the public aware of his or her professional competence.

### **MedCA's Vision**

The vision of MedCA is to be the premier provider of credentials that contribute to the development of allied healthcare professionals and provide them with pathways to lifelong learning and quality, patient-centered healthcare.

### **MedCA's Core Values**

**Dependability** – Customer service is our priority. We believe that by providing customer service that is dependable and reliable, candidates and certificants can be assured that MedCA is here to support them.

**Advancement** – We are advocates for the allied health industry. By supporting Continuing Education opportunities, MedCA is helping to provide a well-rounded employee capable of providing quality patient care.

**Honesty** – Upholding our high ethical standards and incorporating them into our everyday practices shows our commitment to providing quality candidates to the allied healthcare industry.

**Respect** - The Certification Board agrees to respect state and federal laws and stay abreast of industry changes and report on those changes as deemed necessary. They also agree to respect the rights of all members of society and to safeguard confidences and privacy within the constraints of the law.

## **The MedCA Certification Board**

The MedCA Certification Board was established in 2006 to be an autonomous board of MedCA in order to comply with accreditation standards for demonstrating independence from MedCA. The MedCA Certification Board is comprised of seven elected voting members plus the Executive Director, who is nonvoting. Each member represents a stakeholder group; the groups represented are the public, MedCA certified Medical Assistants, certified phlebotomists, allied healthcare instructors, MedCA, the healthcare industry and education and training.

The purpose of the Board is to ensure that the MedCA Medical Assistant Certification exam is current and that it is a reliable credential.

The Certification Board operates in the best interests of the public, the industry and certified members of MedCA by establishing clear guidelines, quality exam materials, and policies and procedures. Any and all activities of the Certification Board are fully funded by MedCA.

## **Code of Ethics**

MedCA believes in a high code of moral ethics. Should you become certified as a Medical Assistant by MedCA, you must agree to abide by the following code of ethics:

1. Be dedicated to your profession. Participate actively in continuing education to enhance your knowledge of your profession.
2. Practice good judgment and be honest in all professional interactions.
3. Respect the rights of your patients and be consistently aware of HIPAA laws and how they apply to both you and your patients.
4. Practice empathy toward your patients.
5. Support and respect state and federal mandates as they apply to your profession.
6. Report any wrongdoings to the appropriate personnel.

The MedCA Certification Board reserves the right to suspend/revoke a Medical Assistant Certification or take action for the following reasons:

1. The report of inappropriate behavior at your place of employment toward a patient.
2. Cheating of any kind. If someone is suspected of cheating, they will forfeit their right to retake the exam.
3. Any violation of state or federal law as it pertains to that individual. Any individual that has been convicted of a felony and wishes to sit for an exam or renewal of their Certification can contact MedCA for consideration.
4. Dissemination of MedCA materials inconsistent with the actual purpose of testing.
5. Fraudulent statements regarding MedCA in any form.

## **Special Accommodations**

MedCA pledges to comply with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended (42 USC Section 12101, et. seq.), and with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2000e, et seq.), to the best of their ability. All requests for accommodations will follow the appropriate jurisdictional laws and regulations.

If you need special accommodations because of a disabling condition, you may ask for special testing services. This request must be submitted in writing and included with your registration. The Special Accommodations form can be found on MedCA's website ([www.medca.us](http://www.medca.us)), under the Forms tab. All requests are handled on an individual basis.

If you are requesting special accommodations, you must submit a letter from an appropriate healthcare professional who is licensed to evaluate the disability. The letter must be written on the healthcare professional's letterhead and include the professional's title, address and telephone number, and the date. The letter must also include a diagnosis of the disabling condition and explain why special testing accommodations are necessary.

The letter must have an original signature from the professional and be dated no more than two years prior to the exam date.

## **Statement of Nondiscrimination**

MedCA does not discriminate or support the discrimination of or against any individual on the basis of gender, ethnicity, political affiliation, age, religion, marital status, national origin, disability, sexual orientation or veteran status.

## **MedCA Certification Exams and Registration Fees**

The following lists MedCA Certification exams addressed in this handbook and associated fees:

Medical Assistant Certification, \$139

### **Medical Assistant Certification**

A Medical Assistant Certification allows candidates to participate in both front- and back-office activities. An individual with a Medical Assistant Certification may perform some or all of the following duties. However, they are not limited to just these responsibilities:

- Answer phones and schedule appointments
- Prepare statements for billing
- Communicate with patients
- Chart a patient's history
- Take a patient's vital signs

- Perform phlebotomy
- Perform an EKG

It is the responsibility of the Medical Assistant to know the laws concerning a Medical Assistant's scope of practice in the state in which they work.

### **Practice Settings**

Medical Assistants can perform a wide variety of functions as well as work in a multitude of settings. The following are settings in which they could possibly work:

- Doctor's office
- Surgical center
- Clinic
- Nursing home
- Long-term care facility
- Acute-care facility
- Ambulatory clinic
- Rehabilitation facility

### **The Role of a Medical Assistant**

The role of a Medical Assistant is vital to today's allied healthcare field. You will be entering a field that has a great need for trained professionals. You will also meet many mental and physical obstacles and challenges. Maintaining high ethical standards is extremely important in the medical field.

Administrative duties include telephone coverage, scheduling, maintenance of medical records and the management of all correspondence. Clinical duties vary according to state law, and you should only perform those duties that are within the scope of your practice.

### **Candidate Eligibility Requirements**

The population eligible to sit for MedCA exams must be 18 years of age, possess a high school diploma or equivalent, and meet one of the following requirements:

- Graduate from a training program (proof of completion is required)
- Or have two or more years of work experience and be currently working in that field – Candidates must provide proof of employment/experience in the form of a Qualification by Experience form, which can be found on the MedCA website ([www.medca.us](http://www.medca.us)), and high school diploma or equivalent.

The laws and regulations pertaining to minimum requirements and the allied health industry vary by state. It is highly recommended that exam candidates familiarize themselves with their particular state's rules and regulations regarding Certification requirements.

## **General Information**

Exams are offered as either paper/pencil or online through a proctored exam site.

## **Online Registration**

Candidates may register for an online MedCA exam by visiting the MedCA website ([www.medca.us](http://www.medca.us)) and completing the online registration form with a debit or credit card to secure the exam date and time.

Customer Service can answer any questions you have or assist you with the registration form. Please call: 516.868.6800.

## **Cancellation Policy/Refund Policy**

If any exam is cancelled or closed, exam fees will be refunded. No exam fee will be refunded for any other reason on or after the scheduled exam date. A candidate may cancel an exam by contacting Customer Service via telephone (516-868-6800), email ([info@medcainc.com](mailto:info@medcainc.com)), fax (516-442-3222) or postal mail (376 S Bayview Avenue, Freeport, NY 11520) no later than one business day in advance of the original exam date in order to receive a refund.

## **Retaking the Exam**

If a candidate initially fails the Medical Assistant exam, they will have two more opportunities to retake the exam. The suggested wait time to retest is at least 30 days. MedCA will provide all failing candidates with information as to which domains require additional study. Upon the third unsuccessful attempt, a candidate must wait one year to take the exam, and remediation through the school or a refresher course is recommended.

## **Exam Information**

### **Study Material**

Candidates are strongly encouraged to prepare for the Medical Assistant Certification exam in advance. A list of materials that students may use to prepare for the exam is available. These materials are not intended to replace classroom learning.

### **Exam Format and Administration**

MedCA Certification Exams are administered via paper/pencil or through the Internet at any exam site. The MedCA Medical Assistant exam consists of 100 multiple-choice questions, and candidates have two hours in which to complete the exam.

### **What to Bring to the Testing Center**

Candidates will be expected to validate their identity with a current government-issued photo ID. A copy of the ID may be kept.

### **What to Expect at the Testing Site**

Upon arrival at the testing site and verification of photo ID, candidates can expect a designated proctor to administer the online or paper/pencil exam in an appropriate format.

### **The Exam Proctor**

The exam proctor will:

- Read aloud the rules and regulations to the examinees
- Reinforce the rules to ensure uniform testing conditions
- Verify the identity of all applicants, via photo ID
- Maintain a strictly enforced timed period for the exam
- Maintain order in the seating of all examinees
- Prohibit cell phone use and any/all electronics
- Ensure that all examinees used the lavatories prior to the start of the exam
- Not answer questions after testing has begun

### **General Testing Guidelines for Paper/Pencil Exams**

Exams are sent to the exam site approximately 3-5 days before the scheduled exam date. Each exam site signs a Director's Oath that indicates the school's agreement to keep the exams in a secure place until the scheduled exam date.

### **General Testing Guidelines for Online Exams**

Test sites can choose to administer MedCA exams online through a web-based system. The online exam is identical to the paper exam.

After the school has indicated the date and time of the exam, candidates create a profile on the MedCA website ([www.medca.us](http://www.medca.us)). They then receive an email from MedCA with the login information that allows them to register and pay for the exam. An automatic email is generated to the candidate and the identified point-of-contact (proctor) with the registration details. On the date of the exam, the proctor logs each student in with the school's login information.

The student has the same amount of time to complete the online Medical Assistant exam as the paper/pencil student does.

The login information for each student is time sensitive; therefore if a student attempts to log in after the allotted time, they are not granted access. As an additional security measure, the online exam does not have printing capabilities.

## Exam Development

**Job Task Analysis (JTA) Study.** Content for this exam was established through a job task analysis (JTA) study, methodology aligning with industry standards and best practices. JTA studies rely on a team of trained and qualified subject matter experts (SMEs) who are Certified Medical Assistants or Certified Medical Assistant educators who have previously worked as Certified Medical Assistants. Ideally, participating SMEs have a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 8 years of experience in the profession in order to ensure adequate experience and knowledge of an entry-level professional. SMEs were asked defined the essential tasks performed by an entry-level Medical Assistant and the necessary knowledge for competent performance of each task. These tasks were then validated using a survey of nationally representative certified Medical Assistants who were asked to rate the importance of each task for competent job performance.

**Establishment of Test Blueprints.** Based on results of the JTA, a formal set of exam specifications, also known as an exam blueprint, was established. Importance ratings from the survey were used to establish content weights for each domain and task area. Weights were then used to determine the number of exam questions included in each section of the exam. The final blueprint was approved by the MEDCA Certification Board (Board).

**Item Development.** Test items were written and reviewed by SMEs under the guidance of a psychometrician. All exam items underwent multiple levels of review and editing. Test items were assembled into an exam form using the detailed exam plan specifications contained in the blueprint. According to industry standards, an operational field exam was conducted in order to evaluate the quality of the exam items and form under actual exam conditions as well as provide evidence of score reliability.

**Standard Setting/Determining the Passing Score.** MEDCA used the modified Angoff technique to set the cut score (passing score) for the 2016 Medical Assistant Certification exam. This method links exam performance to an objective criterion that represents the minimum level of competence of a qualified, Certified Medical Assistant professional.

**Ongoing Development.** MedCA conducts job task analysis (JTA) studies at least every five years to ensure exam specifications are current and relevant. Additionally, new forms of the exam are developed when necessary to ensure security. In 2015, MedCA conducted a JTA. In 2016, Talley Consulting reanalyzed the JTA data to update the 2015 Medical Assistant Certification exam blueprint in accordance with best practices and a new exam form was developed.

## **Exam Scoring**

MedCA exams were designed to test the knowledge necessary for competent performance of a Medical Assistant in today's workforce. The Medical Assistant exam is offered in two ways—paper/pencil or online.

Paper/pencil exams are scored by two individuals. Online exams are scored electronically, providing immediate results to the candidate through web-based software. Each school receives an item analysis of the entire exam group for both paper/pencil and online. All of the scores/results are stored on MedCA's servers and are backed up daily.

The student signs a release when they register for the exam that indicates that the results will be sent directly to the school. In approximately two weeks, the school or the students receive the successful candidates' certificates and wallet cards for distribution, at the discretion of the school.

Unsuccessful candidates receive a letter indicating their score, areas of deficiency and directions on how to register for a retake.

Rescoring will only take place upon written request from an individual. Although a change in score is highly unlikely, an individual can request his/her exam be rescored if they do not pass. No passing exam will be rescored.

Exam results can be appealed under specific conditions in the Appeals Policy.

## **Disciplinary Standards and Procedures**

Following are the grounds for denial of eligibility for the Certified Allied Health Professional credential, or for discipline of the Certified Allied Health professional

- A. Obtaining or attempting to obtain certification, or recertification of the Certified Allied Health credential, by fraud or deception.
- B. Knowingly assisting another to obtain or attempt to obtain certification or recertification by fraud or deception.
- C. Misstatement of material fact or failure to make a statement of material fact in application for certification or recertification.
- D. Falsifying information required for admission to the Allied Health Certification/Recertification Examination, impersonating another examinee, or falsifying education or credentials.
- E. Copying answers, permitting another to copy answers or providing or receiving unauthorized advice about examination content during the Allied Health Care Certification Exam.
- F. Unauthorized possession or distribution of examination materials, including copying and reproducing examination questions and answers.

G. Found guilty of a felony, or pleaded guilty to a felony. However, the Certification Board may grant a waiver based upon mitigating circumstances, i.e. participation in a workforce program for known felons.

Following are the procedures for adjudicating alleged violations of Disciplinary Standards:

A. The CERTIFIED ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL or applicant for the CERTIFIED ALLIED HEALTH credential shall be informed in writing of the basis for denial of eligibility for the CERTIFIED ALLIED HEALTH credential, or for discipline of the CERTIFIED ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL.

B. The CERTIFIED ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL or applicant shall be given the opportunity to submit written evidence regarding the alleged violations.

C. The CERTIFIED ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL or applicant shall be given the opportunity to appeal the decision of the Certification Board to an appeals panel established by the Certification Board.

Possible sanctions:

A. Denial of eligibility for the CERTIFIED ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL Exam

B. Scores invalidated, scores withheld, or scores recalled

C. Probation

D. Reprimand

E. Temporary revocation of the CERTIFIED ALLIED HEALTH credential

F. Permanent revocation of the CERTIFIED ALLIED HEALTH credential

## **Appeals Policy**

### **Exam Appeals**

A candidate may contact MedCA to challenge an exam score. Exam challenges can be in regard to content and/or scoring. These challenges are reviewed by the Compliance Department, which will make a determination as to the validity of the challenge. Exam challenges must be submitted in writing within 14 days of the original exam date. A MedCA Appeal Form can be found on the MedCA website ([www.medca.us](http://www.medca.us)) under the Forms tab.

### **Eligibility Appeals**

The MedCA Certification Board reserves the right to deny registration to individuals who do not meet the Medical Assistant eligibility requirements set forth by the Board. Appeals to a denied registration can be submitted in writing to the Board within 30 days of the denied application. All appeals will be reviewed by the Board and responded to within 4-6 weeks of Appeal Form submission. Appeals may be filed by submitting a MedCA Appeal Form, which can be found on the MedCA website ([www.medca.us](http://www.medca.us)) under the Forms tab.

## **Disciplinary Action Appeals**

MedCA reserves the right to deny or remove a Medical Assistant Certification based on a disciplinary action taken against an individual. It is the responsibility of the candidate/certificant to submit an Exception Request/Appeal Form and supporting documentation in the event he/she wishes to challenge the disciplinary action. Appeals received will be reviewed by the MedCA Certification Board. Appeals may be filed by submitting a MedCA Certification Appeal Form, which can be found on the MedCA website ([www.medca.us](http://www.medca.us)) under the Forms tab.

Once the Appeal form is received by MedCA, candidates/certificants can expect a written response in approximately 30 days.

Appeal decisions by the Certification Board are final and are not subject to further appellate review.

## **Confidentiality Policy**

To protect MedCA's database, personal information, which comprises nonpublic information including, but not limited to, name, address, certification number, etc., is accessible only by designated staff and contractors operating under a nondisclosure agreement, unless required by law. This database may also be used for the purpose of research reports and other published data (such as pass rates, numbers of certificants, score trends, etc.).

Candidate information will remain confidential, with the exclusion of whether a candidate has a current/active certification. Unless required by law, written authorization by the candidate is needed to release exam score information.

Additionally, exam scores or pass/fail status will not be provided over the phone.

If a healthcare professional wishes to verify any individual's Medical Assistant Certification, they can do so by phone 516.868.6800. A MedCA representative will request that the caller provide the last name of the certificant, certificate number and expiration date. MedCA will verify whether the information is correct. If needed, candidates can request a transcript form for employment purposes. Likewise, verification of Certification can be performed on MedCA's website ([www.medca.us](http://www.medca.us)) by clicking on Verify Certification.

## **Keeping Certification Current**

The purpose of recertification is to maintain and promote continuing competence by reviewing and demonstrating understanding of evolving knowledge, methods and technology throughout the individual's professional career. MedCA defines continuing competence as the ongoing knowledge necessary to safely and effectively deliver designated services in the context of an individual's role and environment. It is dynamic, fluid and impacted by many factors as the individual enters new roles and situations.

MedCA and its subject matter experts attempt to stay abreast of current events affecting the Medical Assistant profession; therefore they review continuing education credits based on current events, industry mandates and relevance to the field.

The two-year time period also contributes to professional development because it:

- Allows the certificant enough time to gain employment in the ever-changing industry
- Provides certificants enough time to gain their credits through their place of employment without the loss of work hours
- Ensures that certificants advance their education and exposure to professional development within a reasonable period of time relative to changes in the profession and/or technology.

MedCA Medical Assistant Certification is effective for two years from the date of testing. MedCA requires nine Continuing Education credits every two years. The Continuing Education requirement is satisfied by reading three articles, each of which corresponds to three Continuing Education Units (CEUs), supplied by MedCA, that are consistent with state-of-the-art professional requirements, and answering a series of questions about each. Those who answer a minimum of 65% correctly are recertified. Policies for Continuing Education are established by the MedCA Certification Board.

The allied healthcare field is in constant change and all healthcare professionals must stay current with those changes. Education taken outside of MedCA or through MedCA are both convenient ways to keep the Medical Assistant Certification current.

Continuing Education through MedCA is available in paper/pencil format only. Certificate holders should contact MedCA via phone or email the month prior to the expiration date of their certificates to request a recertification packet. The three Continuing Education articles are distributed to each student via email.

The fee for recertification is \$99. If a Certification is expired for one year or more, the candidate will pay an additional \$35 to have their Certification reinstated. If the certification is expired for more than three years, the individual must retake the certification exam.

### **Record Retention**

All records are housed at MedCA headquarters, located at 376 South Bayview Avenue, Freeport, NY 11520. All paper records are kept in a locked, fire-proof cabinet until the required amount of time has lapsed in which they can safely be destroyed. Electronic records are kept on file (database) indefinitely and are not destroyed. Electronic data is backed up daily.

### **Violation of Examination Procedures**

The MedCA Certification Board has the right to invalidate Medical Assistant exam scores upon receipt of bona fide proof that irregularities or deviations from standard testing policies may have occurred during the administration of an exam. This includes but is not limited to testing irregularities involving the

candidate, exam or agents administering the exam (proctor or exam administrator). Medical Assistant Certification candidates may appeal an invalidation of an exam score using the Appeals procedure noted in the Appeals section.

### **Credential Use**

Candidates who have achieved a passing score on the exam and have a current valid credential may include the certification designation MA1 behind their name. The use of the MA1 designation should only be used in a context consistent with demonstrating professional credentialing.

MedCA will take all appropriate steps, including legal action, to protect its rights in the mark from unauthorized use.