

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

---

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Fiscal Policy

---

BILL: SB 238

INTRODUCER: Senator Grimsley

SUBJECT: Medical Assistant Certification

DATE: December 2, 2015

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Rossitto-Van Winkle	Stovall	HP	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	Brown	Pigott	AHS	<b>Recommend: Favorable</b>
3.	Jones	Hrdlicka	FP	<b>Pre-meeting</b>

---

**I. Summary:**

SB 238 amends s. 458.3485(3), F.S., to remove a voluntary provision which recognizes two certification organizations for medical assistants.

The bill has no fiscal impact to the state.

The bill is effective July 1, 2016.

**II. Present Situation:**

Medical Assistants (MAs) provide medical assistance under the direct supervision and responsibility of a physician. An MA is not a licensed profession in Florida.

Under the supervision of a physician, an MA may perform certain duties, including:

- Performing clinical procedures, including:
  - Performing aseptic procedures;
  - Taking vital signs;
  - Preparing patients for a physician's care;
  - Performing venipunctures and non-intravenous injections; and
  - Observing and reporting patients' signs or symptoms.
- Administering basic first aid;
- Assisting with patient examinations or treatments;
- Operating office medical equipment;
- Collecting routine laboratory specimens as directed by the physician;
- Administering medication as directed by the physician;
- Performing basic laboratory procedures;

- Performing office procedures including all general administrative duties required by the physician; and
- Performing dialysis procedures, including home dialysis.<sup>1</sup>

According to U.S. Department of Labor statistics, Florida is ranked third in the country with 40,770 MAs.<sup>2</sup> Overwhelmingly, MAs find employment within the offices of physicians, health care practitioners, or medical and surgical hospitals.<sup>3</sup> In the next 10 years, job growth in this occupation is expected to increase by 29 percent nationally.<sup>4</sup>

### **Certification of Medical Assistants**

Currently in Florida, an MA is not required to be certified. However s. 458.3485, F.S., specifies that MAs may voluntarily be certified by two certifying entities: the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) or as a Registered Medical Assistant (RMA) by the American Medical Technologists (AMT).<sup>5</sup> Both of these organizations are not-for-profit.<sup>6</sup> At least two other organizations, both for-profit, certify several allied health professions, including certifications for medical assistants.

#### ***The American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA)***

To be eligible for the AAMA certification examination, applicants must be one of the following:

- A completing student<sup>7</sup> or recent graduate<sup>8</sup> from a medical assisting program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education or the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools;
- A non-recent graduate of a Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Program or the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools accredited medical assisting program; or
- An AAMA re-certificant.<sup>9</sup>

An accredited medical assisting program includes academic and clinical training in areas such as human anatomy, physiology, and pathology; medical terminology, record keeping and accounting; laboratory techniques; pharmacology; first aid; office practices and patient relations;

---

<sup>1</sup> Section 458.3485, F.S.

<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2014 (31-9092 Medical Assistants)*, available at <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes319092.htm> (last visited Nov. 23, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment Projections (2012-2022)*, available at <http://data.bls.gov/projections/occupationProj> (last visited Nov. 23, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Section 458.3485(3), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Balasa, Donald, *How the CMA (AAMA) certification, Why it is the premier credential*, p. 1, (Updated November 20, 2015), available at <http://www.aama-ntl.org/docs/default-source/employers/cma-certification-premier-credential.pdf> (last visited Nov. 23, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> A completing student may take the exam no more than 30 days prior to completing their formal education and practicum.

<sup>8</sup> Recent graduates are defined by the AAMA as those students who apply for the exam within 12 months of graduation.

<sup>9</sup> American Association of Medical Assistants, *Exam Eligibility Requirements*, available at <http://www.aama-ntl.org/cma-aama-exam/application-steps/eligibility> (last visited Nov. 23, 2015).

and medical law and ethics.<sup>10</sup> A practicum or an unpaid, supervised on-site work experience in an ambulatory health care setting is also a required component of the certification process.<sup>11</sup>

Certifications are current for 60 months and may be re-certified through either re-examination or by continuing education.<sup>12</sup> Expired certifications greater than 60 months may only be re-certified through examination.<sup>13</sup>

### ***The American Medical Technologists (AMT)***

The AMT is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) through April 2018.<sup>14</sup> In its 2012-13 Annual Report, the AMT reported certification of 38,518 members as RMAs.<sup>15</sup>

Certification for the AMT's nine different specialties may be accomplished through passage of the appropriate examinations and compliance with one of the following five routes:

- Graduation from an accredited medical assisting program with a minimum of 720 clock hours, including 160 hours of clinical externship within the last four years of application for certification;
- Graduation from a formal medical services training program of the U.S. Armed Forces within four years of application for certification or, if greater than four years from application, provide evidence of relevant work experience in three of the last five years prior to application;
- Employment as a MA for a minimum of five out of the last seven years with both clinical and administrative duties, with no more than two years as an instructor in a post-secondary medical assistant program, and proof of high school graduation;
- Employment as an instructor in an accredited medical assisting program, completion of a course of instruction in healthcare discipline related to medical assisting that includes both clinical and administrative duties, and if the applicant has less than three years teaching experience, but more than one year, documentation of at least three years of clinical experience in a healthcare profession in which the scope is equal to the medical assisting scope of practice; or
- Passage of another certification examination that has been approved by the AMT Board of Directors and the applicant has met one of the other eligibility routes.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> American Association of Medical Assistants, *CAAHEP and ABHEP Accredited Programs*, available at <http://www.aama-ntl.org/medical-assisting/caahep-abhes-programs#.VINcok3ouUk> (last visited Nov. 23, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> American Medical Technologies, *Recertification Policies*, available at <http://www.aama-ntl.org/continuing-education/recertification-policies#.VINjxk3ouUk> (last visited Nov. 23, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> American Medical Technologies, *2012-13 Annual Report*, p. 4, available at [http://www.americanmedtech.org/Portals/0/PDF/AMTIE-About%20Us/About%20Us/AMT\\_2013AnnualRpt\\_web.pdf](http://www.americanmedtech.org/Portals/0/PDF/AMTIE-About%20Us/About%20Us/AMT_2013AnnualRpt_web.pdf) (last visited Nov. 23, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>16</sup> American Medical Technologists, RMA Eligibility, *Medical Assistant*, available at <http://www.americanmedtech.org/GetCertified/RMAEligibility.aspx> (last visited Nov. 23, 2015).

### ***Other MA Certifying Organizations***

At least two other organizations certify MAs, the National Healthcareer Association and the National Center for Competency Testing. The National Healthcareer Association allows individuals who have completed a training program for a MA, or have relevant work experience, and have graduated high school to qualify to take the certification examination for a Clinical Medical Assistant.<sup>17</sup>

The National Center for Competency Testing (NCCT) is also accredited by the NCCA and to be eligible for the exam, applicants must meet one of the following:

- Current or graduated student in a MA program from an NCCT authorized school within the past five years;
- Two years of verifiable full-time experience as a MA practitioner within the past five years; or
- Completion of MA training or its equivalent during U.S. military service within the past five years.<sup>18</sup>

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

**Section 1** repeals subsection (3) of s. 458.3485, F.S., to remove the voluntary certification provision through the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) or as a Registered Medical Assistant (RMA) by the American Medical Technologists (AMT). The effect of the bill is that there will no longer be any prescription related to certification, whether voluntary or required, of MAs in the statute.

The bill is effective July 1, 2016.

### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

#### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

#### **B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

#### **C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

---

<sup>17</sup> National Healthcareer Association Candidate Handbook, p. 8, available at <http://www.nhanow.com/docs/default-source/pdfs/handbooks/nha-candidate-handbook.pdf?sfvrsn=2> (last visited Nov. 23, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> National Center for Competency Testing, *Medical Assistant (NCMA)*, available at <https://www.ncctinc.com/Certifications/MA.aspx> (last visited Nov. 23, 2015).

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

Individuals may choose to be certified by the other certification organizations that were not named in the statute. Even though the certification was voluntary, the removal of the reference may still have an impact on those organizations that were either named or not named in the provision.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

None.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill amends section 458.3485 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.