

Medical Assisting

Medical Assisting Education Review Board (MAERB)

INITIAL ACCREDITATION PACKET

Getting Started with CAAHEP Accreditation
of a Medical Assisting Program

2015 Standards and Guidelines for Medical Assisting Educational Programs



Education Review Board

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MAERB

GENERAL INFORMATION

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Accreditation Packet
2015 Standards and Guidelines for Medical Assisting Educational Programs

This packet is designed specifically for medical assisting programs that are interested in applying for programmatic accreditation with the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). The Medical Assisting Education Review Board (MAERB) is a Committee on Accreditation that works in collaboration with CAAHEP, which is the formal accrediting body.

The purpose of accreditation is to ensure a basic level of educational quality for medical assisting programs established at the post-secondary level in community colleges, universities and vocational schools. MAERB assesses the quality of programs seeking accreditation through a peer review process before recommending a status of public recognition to the Commission on Accreditation for Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) for action.

Prior to beginning the process of applying for accreditation, it is important for the program administrators to do some research in order to best prepare the program for the accreditation process. The MAERB office receives phone calls from administrators who have been tasked with developing a brand-new medical assisting program for an institution. The office also receives phone calls from program directors who are working with an existing medical assisting program. In either case, there are a number of documents at the MAERB website (www.maerb.org) that can help you start an initial evaluation of the best method of building your program or preparing your program so that you will be ready for the accreditation process.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The MAERB adopted the 2015 *Standards and Guidelines* in March 2015, and site visits taking place in 2017 will be conducted under the 2015 *Standards and Guidelines*. If you intend to be visited in fall 2016, please contact the MAERB office for the pertinent information.

At the MAERB website, on the page titled “Documents,” you will find the following resources:

2015 Standards and Guidelines (Appendix B: MAERB Core Curriculum)

The *CAAHEP 2015 Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Medical Assisting* are the standards by which medical assisting programs are evaluated. The specific requirements that define CAAHEP accredited medical assisting programs are outlined. “Appendix B” covers the MAERB Core Curriculum, delineating the cognitive objectives and the psychomotor and affective competencies that need to be covered.

MAERB Policy and Procedures Manual

MAERB publishes a *Policy and Procedures Manual* in order to provide specific guidelines for the CAAHEP accredited Medical Assisting Program. MAERB Policy 305 deals specifically with initial accreditation.

CAAHEP Policy Manual

The *CAAHEP Policies and Procedures Manual* provides the important backdrop to the *Standards and Guidelines* and the *MAERB Policy and Procedures Manual*.

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Program Director's Handbook

The *Program Director's Handbook* provides a holistic version of CAAHEP accreditation processes, covering annual responsibilities as well as the comprehensive review process. You should read it in conjunction with the information provided in this packet, as it does go into specific detail. For example, you will find more information about the documents outlined above in the first section, "Overview of CAAHEP Programmatic Accreditation," of the *Handbook*.

Initial Accreditation Self-Study Report Template, 2015 Standards

There is a specific Self-Study Report Template for programs undergoing initial accreditation, and it would be helpful to review the template in order to fully understand the requirements. The completed Self-Study needs to be submitted four months prior to the scheduled visit, so reviewing the requirements will help you plan effectively.

You should read those documents thoroughly, as they will help you to consider how you intend to develop or revise the medical assisting program with which you are working.

In addition, the CAAHEP website (www.caahep.org) provides a great deal of information for you. There is a page for Program Directors (or Sponsors) that is designed specifically to give Program Directors guidance. Also, there is a resource "Your Accreditation Mentor (YAM)" (<http://youraccreditationmentor.caahep.org/>) that is designed for new Program Directors with a lot of helpful advice for programs seeking initial accreditation.

Application Eligibility

Detailed below are the requirements for eligibility and for the site visit.

The program must:

- a) be in a school that holds post-secondary institutional accreditation from a USDE recognized agency (See the U.S. Department of Education to determine if your institution is accredited with one of the agencies that they recognize: http://www2.ed.gov/adms/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg6.html.) **NOTE:** There is a consortium option for other organizations, so please contact the MAERB office to learn about that option.
- b) be in compliance with CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines*.
- c) have taught and assessed the competency-based curriculum that contains MAERB Core Curriculum cognitive objectives and psychomotor and affective competencies before its site visit.
- d) have already graduated its first class before the scheduled site visit date. (See section below on "Process and Timeframe for applying.")
- e) have a fully qualified Program Director in place.

NOTE: The absence of a qualified program director automatically puts the comprehensive review process on hold for initial accreditation applicants. There will be no site visit conducted without a qualified program director available on site. If the Program Director is not currently fully qualified but expects to be qualified prior to the site visit, MAERB will allow your program to proceed with scheduling a site visit date. However, if the PD is still not fully qualified

approximately two months prior to the visit, the visit will be postponed and the program will need to pay the \$500 rescheduling fee.

Process and Timeframe for applying

One of the central questions is how long does the initial accreditation process last? Unfortunately, the answer to that depends on both the program's readiness and the various accreditation processes. The length of the accreditation process varies, depending on the program's response time at various stages, the availability of surveyors, and the meeting dates of the MAERB and CAAHEP.

The first step in applying for initial accreditation is to submit a Request for Accreditation Services (RAS) at the CAAHEP website. You will find that information under the "For Program Director's" tab. The sponsor will need to submit a completed CAAHEP "Request for Accreditation Services" form on the CAAHEP website. Use **Option 1**, Electronic Submission, for completing and submitting the application. The RAS will be sent directly to MAERB for its review.

The RAS will be reviewed by the MAERB Office. Below are some specific issues that are important when filling out the RAS for medical assisting programs:

- It is not necessary to fill out the section for medical advisor but all the other portions do need to be filled out.
- The school's institutional accreditor must be listed among those agencies that are approved by the USDE.
- The "CEO" contact is the "executive" lead of the institution/campus and the person that needs to be copied on all MAERB and CAAHEP correspondence.
- The "Dean" contact should be the immediate supervisor of the medical assisting program Director.

It is recommended that you submit the RAS as soon as you know when you would like to schedule your site survey for initial accreditation, as that gives the MAERB office time to schedule the visit. In addition, it gives you access to the MAERB office, as you will be assigned a Case Manager to help you with any questions. You may submit the RAS prior to knowing exactly when you would like to schedule the visit.

After receiving the RAS, MAERB will then send an email acknowledging receipt of the CAAHEP Request of Accreditation Services. In response, you are asked to submit the following information in a survey that you can find at this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/InitialAccreditation>

The Survey asks the following questions:

- Is the Program Director fully qualified under the 2015 *Standards and Guidelines* in the following areas:
 - A minimum of an Associate Degree
 - Three full years of health care work experience (not to include any work experience in an educational setting)
 - One year (two semesters or three quarters) of teaching experience in post-secondary or vocational/technical education
 - 160 hours of performing or observing medial assisting duties in an ambulatory healthcare setting. NOTE: The 160 hours does not include hours spent observing students at the Practicum/Externship/Clinical

- Current medical assisting certification in one of the following four NCCA-accredited credentials in Medical Assisting: 1. CMA (AAMA) 2. RMA (AMT) 3. NCMA (NCCT) 4. CCMA (NHA) 5. CMAC (AMCA)
 - Documented instruction received in educational theory and techniques
- The Program Director will need to be able to document all of these qualifications upon request.

- What award options does the medical assisting program offer? Please pick one of the following:
 - A diploma/certificate option
 - An Associate degree option
 - A diploma/certificate and an Associate degree option

If you offer two options, do you want to have both options accredited with CAAHEP?

- Is your medical assisting program being taught at any location other than the main campus?
 - What is the percentage of the medical assisting program that is taught at the additional campus/es?
- What month/year did or will the program graduate its first class of students?
- Have you already started to work on your Self-Study Report (due 4 months prior to the site visit)?
- In what month and year do you anticipate having your Self-Study Report completed?
- In which month and year would you like the site visit to occur?
- Site visits are generally conducted on either Mon-Tues or Thurs-Fri. During the site visit, classes must be in session on at least one day (preferably the first day), with students, faculty and administrators available during the entire visit. Please provide two possible timeframes for a site visit.

The responses to this survey will be reviewed, and you will be contacted in order for a site visit to be set up and for the payment of the appropriate invoices.

Site surveys for initial accreditation survey dates are somewhat flexible, based on completion of the self-study report and availability of a survey team. The MAERB office tries to schedule them as efficiently as possible for initial accreditation; due to that, it is very helpful if the program submits the RAS as soon as possible.

For detailed information about the Site Visit, refer to the *Program Director's Handbook*, Section III Comprehensive Review. You will find all the details about how to best prepare the Self-Study Report (SSR) and how to prepare for the visit.

Accreditation Fees

There is no fee for submitting the Request for Accreditation Services on the CAAHEP website. There is a base fee of \$1,250 for the initial application fee. That fee does include the registration of the Program Director to an Accreditation Workshop. The base fee will increase to \$1500 for all visits scheduled after July 1, 2017. There is also the Comprehensive Review Fee, covering the costs of the site visitors, which is \$2,300.

The outline above focuses only on actual fees for the initial accreditation process. Additionally, the program should budget for the time, energy, and institutional resources that will be used and employed in preparing for the accreditation process.

And there are also annual fees that are charged to accredited programs. For example, CAAHEP has an annual fee that is currently \$450 and will be increased to \$550 for the FY 2017. MAERB also has an Annual Service Fee, which is \$1,200.

In addition, after being granted initial accreditation, the program is subject to program and personnel change fees.

You will find the Accreditation Fee Schedule on the MAERB website and in the MAERB *Policies and Procedures Manual*.

Outcomes

As mentioned above, CAAHEP accreditation focuses on reviewing programs based upon their outcomes. Standard IV.B.1 deals directly with Outcomes assessment and defines the outcomes. You will find specific information about the thresholds for outcomes in the “Outcome Threshold Chart” on the Documents’ page at the MAERB website. Medical assisting programs that are being reviewed for initial accreditation are required to put into place the infrastructure to collect data about these outcomes. However, the program that is pursuing initial accreditation is not required at the time of the site visit to show that it is meeting the established MAERB outcome thresholds.

CAAHEP accredited medical assisting programs are required to submit an Annual Report Form (ARF), and there is information about that process in the *Program Director’s Handbook*, Section II. Annual and Ongoing Responsibilities, Item A. Programs applying for initial accreditation do not fill out an Annual Report, but they do need to illustrate that they have begun collecting and organizing the data, even though that will not be evaluated during the site visit. The “Relevant Resources” in that specific section of the *Program Director’s Handbook* provides more information about resources available to you on the MAERB website regarding outcomes, as well as some helpful tools in order to best collect the data for the outcomes.

Conclusion

The MAERB hopes that we will have the opportunity to work with you during the accreditation process. Please feel free to contact the MAERB office after you have reviewed the Accreditation Packet and other materials discussed in the packet. Your feedback about the information provided is also greatly appreciated.