MAERB Spring Report 2021

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MAERB's *Standards and Guidelines Revision Process*

The MAERB Members are currently evaluating the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Medical Assisting* and the MAERB Core Curriculum. Thank you to all of you who participated in the MAERB survey that asked you to evaluate the current curriculum and suggest additions and exclusions. Your input is greatly appreciated.

MAERB reviews the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines* and the MAERB Core Curriculum every five years, and the process for revision and CAAHEP approval takes approximately two years. In addition, after final CAAHEP approval, there will be an approximate 18-to-24-month period for the programs to fully incorporate the new curriculum.

Outlined below is a tentative timeline for the process of revising the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines* and the implementation of the new *Standards and Guidelines* once they are approved:

- **September 2021:** MAERB will circulate a draft of the updated *Standards and Guidelines* and MAERB Core Curriculum to the community of CAAHEP-accredited Medical Assisting programs for review and Feedback.
- **November 2021:** MAERB will meet and review the comments from the community and evaluate the proposed CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines* and MAERB Core Curriculum.
- **December 2021**: MAERB will submit the updates to CAAHEP for review and comments.
- **March 2022**: The CAAHEP Board discusses and approves the proposed Guidelines.
- **April 2022:** The finalized and approved CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines* are sent to the CAAHEP-accredited medical assisting programs.
- **January 2024**: Programs are visited using the new MAERB Core Curriculum

If this schedule changes, the change will be announced in fall 2021, but we are moving ahead productively. The updated CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Medical Assisting* will be using CAAHEP's new template, which was approved in January 2021.

We anticipate that we will start conducting Self-Study workshops based on the new *Standards and Guidelines* and MAERB Core Curriculum in fall 2022.

MAERB's New Contact Information

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MAERB Office staff are working virtually. We still, however, are dedicated to serving the CAAHEP-accredited programs. As with any new method of working, there are adjustments. Outlined below are the central points of contact for the MAERB office. Please feel free to contact your Program Manager if you have any further questions.

Telephone: There is a new telephone number for MAERB—312-392-0155. When you listen to the message, you will hear the extensions for the MAERB staff. Please call us when you have questions.

Submitting Self-Studies, Progress Reports, and other Accreditation Materials: Program Directors have the capacity to upload accreditation documentation, such as Self-Study Reports, Progress Reports, Requests for Reconsideration, and other large file submissions, on the Submissions tab of the MAERB website. The directions for doing so are on the Documents tab of the MAERB website (www.maerb.org) in the "Program Resources/Accreditation Resources" section. The instructions are titled, "Submitting Documents, MAERB website." Program Directors were sent their permanent password in May 2020 or in a subsequent notification. This upload system is designed for any large collection of documents. If your submission is not large or multi-layered, you are encouraged to send the documents via email to your Program Manager.

Payments for Accreditation Services or Annual Program Service Fees: If you want to pay by credit card (MasterCard, Discover, Visa, or American Express) you can contact Tasha Harris at 312-392-0155, ext. 406, or write tharris@maerb.org. If you are paying by check, make the check payable to the MAERB and mail it to the MAERB, 20 N. Wacker Drive, Suite 1575, Chicago, IL 60606.

MAERB COVID-19 Statement—Sunset Date, August 15, 2021

As we are living in unprecedented times, we have needed to make unprecedented adaptations. Even in this chaotic period, the central goal of a CAAHEP-accredited medical assisting program remains the same: producing competent entry-level medical assistants and preserving patient and student safety. At the same time, the pathway to producing those competent entry-level medical assistants may vary. As outlined in the MAERB COVID-19 Statement, the programs can implement a broader-than-normal range of approaches to the practicum, including simulation. You will find the complete MAERB COVID-19 Statement at the MAERB website (www.maerb.org) on the Reference tab.

The Sunset Date for this specific allowance is currently set for August 15, 2021. A survey will be sent out by the MAERB Office in late March/early April to determine the access that programs to lab and practicum sites currently have. If there is going to be any further extension to the Sunset Date, you will be informed of it in late April.

Annual Report Form (ARF) 2021, Deadlines

Fall Submissions, 2021 ARF (2020 admission and graduation cohorts, as well as updates to prior years)

> **August 16, 2021**: Program Directors receive a notice informing them that in approximately 30 days the 2021 ARF will be accessible online.
> **September 16-17, 2021**: Program Directors will be sent an email with brief ARF logistics along with the green light to proceed.
> **October 22, 2021**: Firm deadline for submission of the 2021 ARF

Spring Submissions, 2021 ARF (2020 admission and graduation cohorts, as well as updates to prior years)

December 13, 2021: Program Directors will receive a notice informing them that in approximately 30 days the 2021 ARF will be accessible online.
January 13-14, 2022: Program Directors will be sent an email with brief ARF logistics along with the green light to proceed.
February 18, 2022: Firm deadline for submission of the 2021 ARF

Annual Report Form—Tracking Tool Submission

Any new process brings about new questions, and the MAERB office would like to share some of the issues that have emerged when they have reviewed the programs' *2019 and beyond ARF Tracking Tool*. Below you will find a comprehensive list of items that have complicated the review of the ARF. We are publishing this list so that these areas can be avoided when you submit your 2021 ARF and matching tracking tool.

As we have outlined in several training sessions, we encourage you to update your ARF Tracking Tool throughout the year rather than completing your ARF Tracking Tool while you are completing your ARF, which essentially doubles your work. For the 2021 ARF, which will be focused on the 2020 admission and graduate cohorts, you will be submitting a Tracking Tool that contains information for your 2019 admission and graduate cohorts **AND** your 2020 admission and graduate cohorts. If you have information from previous cohorts or for 2021 that is no problem, as the MAERB office uses the filter function to doublecheck.

We will be holding more training sessions later in the spring to provide more information about using the tracking tool.

Common general mistakes in filling out the ARF Tracking Tool:

- **Leaving columns blank.** Unless a specific column is not applicable to the given student or graduate, it should be filled out. The only optional columns on the Tracking Tool are the columns for the student's middle name and for the student ID.
- **Uploading a Tracking Tool to the Files tab of the ARF that isn't fully updated** and, and such, doesn't match the data that is reported on the ARF. Please make sure that your Tracking Tool matches the top and second-to-the-top row of your ARF before uploading it.
- **Removing data from the uploaded Tracking Tool.** Your Tracking Tool is meant to be a comprehensive document with only two tabs. Please don't worry about removing certain years of students from the Tracking Tool. The MAERB office will simply use the Filter feature of Excel to be able to view the data that we need to see.

Common specific errors that being made on the ARF Tracking Tool:

AdmissionCohort tab:
1. Students missing from the tab: Failing to include the students who dropped or are "in-progress, i.e., including only the names of those who graduated.
2. Leaving columns H, I, or K blank: If the student has dropped, you must fill out columns H and I. If the student has graduated, you must fill out column K.
3. Having admission dates that don't match the ARF: Some PDs are entering into column F the month in which the student finished the Trigger Course, and this is usually different than the

month of admission that the PD has reported on the ARF. The months and dates on the Tracking Tool must match the ARF.

4. <u>Not keeping the status of the student current in column G</u>: If a student is labeled as a drop (D), but later re-enrolls or graduates, the status of that student must be changed to reflect the current status (i.e., either IP or G).

5. <u>Creating other abbreviations in column G</u>: Please use only D, IP, or G in this column. Please don't create new abbreviations. If you want to add special comments for a particular student, create a "Comments" column on the Tracking Tool.

GradCohort tab:

1. <u>Failing to fill out all the columns on the tab</u>: Many programs are entering the name of the graduate but not filling out the remainder of the columns.

2. <u>Adding students who haven't graduated yet</u>: If you add a student to this tab who hasn't graduated yet, it can cause confusion.

3. <u>Leaving columns H, I, P, Q, S, or T blank</u>: Dates that surveys are sent and received (if applicable to the respective student) are required fields of the Tracking Tool. Likewise, if a person has gotten a job in the field, in addition to placing an X into column O, columns P and Q must be completed. If you do not know the workplace of a graduate, then unfortunately, you cannot count them as a positive placement.

4. <u>Failing to mark the domain fields</u>: If a graduate or employer survey has been returned, each of the 3 corresponding domain fields needs to be completed (with a Yes or a No). Please don't leave these fields blank.

5. <u>Entering numbers (or other data) into the domain fields</u>: Even though each returned survey is evaluated on the 1-to-5 Likert scale, we ask that you not enter a number into the columns for the 3 domains. Rather, just enter Yes if the average score for that field is 3.0 or above, and a No if the average is below 3.0. It will help you with the reporting process and make it easier for you to filter.

6. <u>Accounting for every graduate in the Job Placement columns of the Tracking Tool</u>: Every graduate of the program should have an X (and only one X) placed into either column M, N, or O. Many programs are leaving these columns blank for some of the graduates.

7. <u>Placing dates into column S for students who didn't get a job in the field</u>: You should only complete column S (i.e., the date that the employer survey was sent) if the graduate got a job in the field. Otherwise, the column should be left blank.

8. <u>Leaving the exam dates blank</u>: If a student took any of the 5 qualifying certification exams, not only should you mark Pass or Fail, you need to include the date on which the test was taken. This information should be readily available from all of the certifying agencies.

MAERB at 2021 AAMA Conference

The MAERB is planning to be at the AAMA Annual Conference in Houston, Texas, from September 24-27, 2021, but our activities, due to the pandemic, will be curtailed. The MAERB will be hosting the following event at the date and time below:

- Friday, September 24, 2021: MAERB Forum, 1:30-3:30 PM

During the MAERB Forum, you will receive a report about MAERB's activities over the last two years, an overview of the proposed new CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines* and the MAERB Core Curriculum, and an extended question and answer period. Because we will be introducing proposed changes to the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines*, MAERB will also be holding a virtual MAERB Forum in the fall of 2021, at a date to be determined.

In addition, MAERB staff will be available at the AAMA conference for conversation and consultation.

We recognize that many institutions are prohibiting or limiting professional travel. Due to the pandemic, its many aftermaths, and the larger transition period, MAERB has determined that its Self-Study workshops will be conducted virtually rather than at the 2021 AAMA Conference so that we can serve as many people as possible. Because of the scheduled change in *Standards and Guidelines*, the virtual Self-Study workshops will be designed for programs with a site visit scheduled for 2022 and 2023. We will, however, be planning to offer Self-Study workshops for the new *Standards and Guidelines* at the AAMA Annual Conference in 2022, and we will keep you informed.

Training Webinars: 2019 and beyond ARF Tracking Tool

It is never too early to start preparing for next year's ARF. As you know, all Program Directors are required to submit their fully updated tracking tool that substantiates the aggregated data that they are reporting on their ARF. In April 2021, the MAERB will be holding two webinars for Program Directors to demonstrate effective ways to use the ARF Tracking Tool. The dates, times, and registration links for the webinars are listed below. The two webinars will cover identical content. There is currently a training video posted on the MAERB's website (www.maerb.org) on the Documents tab. The training video is under the section, "Annual Report Form," and it is titled, "ARF Outcome Tracking Tool."

April 22, 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm Central Time (US and Canada)
Register in advance for this meeting:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUqfu2srDovHdbMGbYhZeHRHO5kfxeUfNzT

April 30, 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm Central Time (US and Canada)
Register in advance for this meeting:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwtduuuqj8tEtK3LUkVZfOlItmrMOKB2gH

Virtual Site Visits—Spring 2021

For the site visits taking place in spring 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MAERB is currently conducting virtual site visits so that it can honor the good and timely work that has been done by the CAAHEP-accredited medical assisting programs in preparing for the accreditation process. In designing virtual site visits as a temporary measure, MAERB is responding to the national/global health crises, with the intent of keeping our constituents and communities of interest safe and healthy.

A virtual site visit uses a web-based audio and visual connection so that the site surveyors can interact effectively with the Medical Assisting Program Director and instructional staff, the institutional administration and support staff, the students and the graduates, and the Advisory Committee.

At this time, MAERB is still evaluating whether the fall 2021 site visits will be face-to-face or virtual, and the Program Directors with fall 2021 visits have been informed of that fact. Because pandemics are unpredictable, the MAERB will determine if it is safe or healthy for people to travel, and, if not, the MAERB will conduct virtual site visits for fall 2021.

The virtual site visits are, as explained above, a temporary measure; at the same time, we will learn from this temporary measure, and we will share the information that we learn with the larger community.

Virtues of Accreditation

The MAERB is going to be showcasing the Virtues of Accreditation on a regular basis in its biannual MAERB Report. At the September 2019 MAERB Forum, during the brief discussion of the three-year CMA (AAMA) pilot program that allows graduates from unaccredited medical assisting programs to sit for the CMA (AAMA), participants requested that MAERB provide a brief outline of the virtues of accreditation so that Program Directors and other instructional staff of CAAHEP-accredited medical assisting programs can discuss the benefits of CAAHEP accreditation with administrators at the organizations that sponsor the medical assisting program.

Below you will find a list of accreditation virtues that we first published in fall 2019 and have updated since then. The MAERB welcomes your participation in this process, as we realize that you, too, have a list of advantages that you outline when you speak to students, administrators, and employers. Please contact Sarah Marino (smarino@maerb.org) if you have additional ideas.

The final highlighted point is new and was contributed by Laura L. McClain, RN, CMA(AAMA), Program Director, Tri-County Technical College (Pendleton, SC). The contribution is greatly appreciated, and, as we stated above, we welcome additional contributions.

- **Accreditation assures professional competence**: Graduates from a CAAHEP-accredited program have covered the comprehensive MAERB Core Curriculum and achieved the psychomotor and affective competencies to ensure patient safety.
- **Accreditation offers standardization, uniformity, and consistency**: All CAAHEP-accredited programs cover the same MAERB Core Curriculum, so employers can be guaranteed that the students know a given body of entry-level knowledge.
- **Accreditation requires external verification, review, and validation**: In fulfilling the standards, CAAHEP-accredited programs submit their outcomes to MAERB for an annual review and go through a comprehensive site visit review with CAAHEP every ten years.
- **Accreditation protects resources:** The accreditation *Standards and Guidelines* specify that the students and faculty have access to specific resources to ensure that the program can comply with the national standards.
- **Accreditation enhances the institution's reputation**: Institutions participating in programmatic accreditation distinguish themselves from other institutions.
- **Accreditation is public**: CAAHEP-accredited programs are listed in a CAAHEP database for student and educator access, and CAAHEP-accredited programs post their status and outcomes.
- **Accreditation travels well**: Employers across the country recognize the value of accreditation.

- **Accreditation advances the profession**: The standardization, uniformity, and consistency that accreditation ensures, as well as the review of the *Standards and Guidelines* and MAERB Core Curriculum, move the profession forward toward greater recognition in the allied health field.
- **Accreditation acknowledges accountability**: Educational programs graduating prospective healthcare workers must be accountable in ensuring patient safety, and accreditation supports the process of accountability with curriculum that is innovative, relevant, and current.

You can help us by adding to this list, so please contact Sarah Marino (smarino@maerb.org) with your suggestions, and we will continue with this list.