



Initial Accreditation Packet

Getting Started with CAAHEP Accreditation of a Medical Assisting Program

Based on the *2022 Standards and Guidelines*

MEDICAL ASSISTING
EDUCATION REVIEW BOARD

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Accreditation Packet

2022 Standards and Guidelines for Medical Assisting Educational Programs

Introduction

This packet is designed specifically for medical assisting programs that are interested in applying for initial 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 (CoA) that works in collaboration with CAAHEP, the formal accrediting body.

The purpose of accreditation is to ensure a basic level of educational quality for post-secondary medical assisting programs established in eligible community colleges, universities, vocational schools, hospitals, clinics, and the armed forces. 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 review the accreditation documentation to best prepare the program for the accreditation process. Whether you are tasked with developing a brand-new medical assisting program or bringing an existing program into compliance with the CAAHEP Standards, there are several documents at the MAERB website (www.maerb.org) that can help you to be ready for the accreditation process. In addition, the CAAHEP website (www.caahep.org) provides a great deal of information for you. You will find a page there for Program Directors (or Program Sponsors).

MAERB is developing a page on its website specific to Initial Accreditation programs, on which we will slowly be developing resources specific to initial accreditation. The page is in process. You can find it under the [Resources Tab on the Initial Accreditation page](#).

At the MAERB website, you will find the following resources, amongst many others:

2022 Standards and Guidelines (Appendix B: MAERB Core Curriculum)
[Resources Tab, Standards and Policies Page](#)

The CAAHEP 2022 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 there. “Appendix B” covers the MAERB Core Curriculum, delineating the cognitive objectives and the psychomotor and affective competencies that need to be covered in your curriculum.

MAERB Policy and Procedures Manual
[Resources Tab, Standards and Policies Page](#)

MAERB publishes a *Policy and Procedures Manual* to provide specific guidelines for all CAAHEP accredited Medical Assisting programs. MAERB Policy 305 deals specifically with those programs that are seeking initial accreditation. In addition, the MAERB *Policy and Procedures Manual* is designed to explain and illustrate the CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines, so you will find helpful information in the policies.

Program Director’s Handbook
[Resources Tab, Site Visits and Program Resources](#) **Section “Program Resources/Accreditation Resources”**

The *Program Director's Handbook* provides a holistic overview of CAAHEP accreditation processes, covering annual responsibilities as well as the comprehensive review site visit process. You should read it in conjunction with the information provided in this packet, as it gives important additional details. For example, in the *Program Director's Handbook* you will find more information about the relationship between CAAHEP and MAERB.

Initial Accreditation Self-Study Report Template, 2022 Standards

[Resources Tab, Site Visits and Program Resources](#) **Section "Self-Study Report Templates"**

There is a separate and distinct Self-Study Report Template for programs undergoing initial accreditation. Even though you may not be ready to work on your Self Study, it would be helpful for you to review the template to better understand the requirements of the accreditation process. The completed Self-Study needs to be submitted four months prior to the scheduled visit, so reviewing the requirements now will help you plan effectively in case revisions need to be made to your curriculum.

When you download it, you will receive a zipped folder, and you will need to remove the information from that zipped folder and place it in your shared drive.

Eligibility Requirements to Apply for Initial Accreditation:

Detailed below are the requirements for eligibility for applying for CAAHEP accreditation.

- I. The program must be sponsored by one of the following sponsors:
 1. A post-secondary academic institution accredited by an institutional accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and must be authorized under applicable law or other acceptable authority to provide a post-secondary program, which awards a minimum of a diploma/*certificate* at the completion of the program.

Go to both of the U.S. Department of Education links below to determine if your institution is accredited with one of the agencies that they recognize:

https://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg3.html

https://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg8.html#VocationalEducation

2. A hospital or medical center or other governmental medical service, which is accredited by a healthcare accrediting agency or equivalent that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and must be authorized under applicable law or other acceptable authority to provide healthcare, which awards a minimum of a certificate at the completion of the program.
 - a. The following accreditation agency, based upon their designation by the CMS, would be appropriate:
 - i. The Joint Commission (TJC)
3. A branch of the United States Armed Forces, or a federal or state governmental agency, which awards a minimum of a certificate at the completion of the program.

4. A consortium, which is a group made up of two or more education providers, that operate an educational program through a written agreement that outlines the expectations and responsibilities of each of the partners. At least one of the consortium partners must meet the requirements of a program sponsor set forth in Standard I.A.1, I.A.2, or I.A.3.
- II. The program must have a fully qualified Program Director in place by the time of formal Request of Accreditation Services at the CAAHEP website. Standard III.B.1 a & b outlines the responsibilities and the qualifications of the Program Director, and you can see those requirements outlined below.

1. Program Director

a. Responsibilities

The program director must be responsible for all aspects of the program, including but not limited to...

- 1) Administration, organization, supervision of the program;
- 2) Continuous quality review and improvement of the program; and
- 3) Academic oversight, including curriculum planning and development, and outcomes.

b. Qualifications

The program director must...

- 1) Be an employee of the sponsoring institution;
- 2) Possess a minimum of an associate degree;
- 3) Be credentialed in good standing in medical assisting, by an organization whose credentialing exam is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or under International Organization for Standardization (ISO);
- 4) Have medical or allied health education or training;
- 5) Have experience related to the profession of medical assisting; and
- 6) Have documented education in instructional methodology.

Instructional methodology education may be demonstrated by documentation of completed workshops, in-service sessions, seminars, or completed college courses on topics including, but not limited to, learning theory, curriculum design, test construction, teaching methodology, or assessment techniques.

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 (PD) 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.

Requirements for the Initial Accreditation Site Visit to Occur:

The program must:

- a) be in general compliance with CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines*.
- b) have taught and assessed the entire competency-based curriculum that contains the **MAERB Core Curriculum** cognitive objectives and psychomotor and affective competencies in Appendix B of the CAAHEP Standards before its site visit i.
- c) have at least one cohort of students that have been taught and assessed on the MAERB Core Curriculum and that have completed all program requirements prior to the scheduled site visit date. (See section below on “Process and Timeframe for applying.”)

Process and Timeframe for applying

One of the central questions is “How long does the initial accreditation process last?” Unfortunately, the answer to that largely depends on the program’s readiness, including how quickly it can compose its Self-Study and the month in which the site visit occurs. MAERB typically makes accreditation recommendations to CAAHEP every January/February and July/August, and CAAHEP meets for the final review every March and September.

The first step in applying for initial accreditation is to submit a **Request for Accreditation Services (RAS)** online at the CAAHEP website. You will find that information under the *Resources* tab on the *Site Visit and Program Resources* page, and the link is in the section “Initial Accreditation.” The completed RAS will then be sent directly to the MAERB office for review.

Below are some specific issues that are important when filling out the RAS for medical assisting programs:

- The accreditor must be listed among those agencies that are approved by the USDE or DHHS.
- The “CEO” contact is the “executive” lead of the institution/campus and the person that the program wishes to be copied on all MAERB and CAAHEP correspondence.
- The “Dean” contact should be the immediate supervisor of the medical assisting program director.

We recommend that you complete your online RAS as soon as you are certain that you plan to pursue initial accreditation with CAAHEP. As such, this gives the MAERB office plenty of time to schedule your site visit. In addition, you will be assigned a Program Manager to help you with any questions, so you will have a personalized contact. You may submit the RAS prior to knowing exactly when you would like to schedule the visit.

After receiving your completed RAS from CAAHEP, the MAERB office will then send an email acknowledging receipt of the RAS. In response, you will then be asked to submit the following information in a survey that you can find at this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/InitialAccreditation>. Please do not complete this survey until after you have submitted your RAS and been in contact with the MAERB office.

The survey asks the following questions:

- 1) Name and address of the medical assisting program, along with the institution’s or organization’s name.

- 2) Do you have the documentation to validate that the Program Director is fully qualified under the 2022 *Standards and Guidelines* in the following areas?
 - a) Is an employee of the program's sponsor
 - b) A minimum of an associate degree has been earned
 - c) Has current medical assisting certification in one of the following NCCA-accredited credentials in Medical Assisting: 1. CMA (AAMA) 2. RMA (AMT) 3. NCMA (NCCT) 4. CCMA (NHA) 5. CMAC (AMCA)
 - d) Has medical or allied health education or training
 - e) Has experience related to the profession of medical assisting (other than that of teaching medical assisting)
 - f) Has received documented education in instructional methodology, which is not necessary a formal class but can include workshops, seminars, institutional offerings, and so on
- 3) If you responded "no" to any of the questions above, please explain the timeframe for the Program Director to achieve those qualifications.
- 4) What credential does the Program Director Hold. List the name of the credential, the agency that issued it to you, the year in which you last sat for that certification exam, and the date of expiration.
- 5) What award options does the medical assisting program offer? Please pick one of the following:
 - a) A diploma/certificate option
 - b) An associate degree option
 - c) A diploma/certificate, as well as an associate degree option in medical assisting
- 6) If you offer two options, do you want to have both options accredited with CAAHEP?
- 7) Are any medical assisting classes/courses being taught face-to-face at a location other than the main campus?
- 8) Are any of your medical assisting classes/courses being taught face-to-face at another location? If so, what is the approximate percentage of the medical assisting program that is taught at that additional location, and can students take all the courses within your program at that additional location without having to travel to the main campus for instruction?
- 9) In what month/year did or will the program graduate its first class of students?
- 10) How long (in months) is the program/s for which you plan to apply for CAAHEP accreditation? In other words, how many months would it take a full-time student, hypothetically speaking, to complete each program for which you are applying for CAAHEP accreditation, including the practicum?
- 11) Is the program for-credit, or is it non-credit?
- 12) If the program is for-credit, how many credit hours is the program that is applying for CAAHEP accreditation?
- 13) How many clock hours is the program, excluding the practicum? You should calculate the amount of time that the students spend in the courses that are included in program. This calculation does not include pre-requisite courses that are taken prior to admittance to the program. This question must be answered even if the program is a for-credit program.
- 14) How many hours is the required practicum?
- 15) If your program is a for-credit program, are the hours semester credit hours, quarter credit hours, or modules?
- 16) If your program is a non-credit program, do you have an articulation agreement so that students can transfer credits into a for-credit degree program?
- 17) What is the month and year on which the first group of students who were taught the entire MAERB Core Curriculum from the CAAHEP Standards graduated?
- 18) Approximately what percentage of your medical assisting program's curriculum is offered via distance education?

- 19) Do you teach or assess any psychomotor or affective competencies via distance education for any of the following three subject areas of the MAERB Core Curriculum: 1) Anatomy, Physiology & Pharmacology; 2) Infection Control; 3) Protective Practices?
- 20) Have you already started to work on your Self-Study Report?
- 21) Have you already attended a MAERB Self-Study workshop, or do you plan to attend this workshop prior to the site visit?
- 22) In what month and year do you anticipate having your Self-Study Report completed?
- 23) In which month and year would you like the site visit to occur? You will need to submit the Self-Study four months prior to the site visit.
- 24) 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 specific date options for your site visit (E.g., Monday-Tuesday, March 13-14, 2028).
- 25) How many times a year do you admit students into your medical assisting program?
- 26) By what process do you determine a student to be a part of your medical assisting program?
- 27) If your program admits based on completion of a Trigger Course, which is the first course in which psychomotor and/or affective competencies from the MAERB Core Curriculum of Appendix B of the CAAHEP Standards are being taught and assessed, what is the name and course number of that course?

The responses to this survey will be reviewed, and you will be contacted for a site visit to be set up and for the payment of the appropriate invoices. We will set up a meeting with you to cover the answers to these questions and provide you with any needed guidance.

Site visits for initial accreditation will be based, in large measure, on the date by which you can complete your Self Study Report. The MAERB office tries to schedule initial accreditation site visits as quickly and efficiently as possible; for this reason, it is very helpful if the program submits their 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*** (RAS) on the CAAHEP website. However, MAERB's initial accreditation application fee of \$1,800 will need to be paid before a site visit date can be scheduled and confirmed. There is also the Comprehensive Review Fee of \$3,300 for the standard 1 ½ day site visit. The Comprehensive Review Fee covers the costs of the site visitors and must be paid 4 months before the site visit.

Additionally, the program should budget for the time, energy, and institutional resources that will be used and employed in preparing for the accreditation process.

Once your program becomes CAAHEP-accredited, there are annual fees (both from CAAHEP and MAERB) that are charged to accredited programs. CAAHEP's annual fee varies depending upon the [number of CAAHEP-accredited programs at your institution/organization](#). MAERB's annual fee is currently \$1,700, with payment due every January. This fee will increase to \$1,975 on January 1, 2027.

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 *About* tab of 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. You will find specific information about the thresholds for outcomes in the “Outcome Threshold Chart” on the *ARF Information* page, under *Resources*, 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, your program is not required to meet any outcome thresholds until after the site visit and the granting of initial accreditation.

CAAHEP-accredited medical assisting programs are required to submit an Annual Report Form (ARF); there is information about the ARF 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 ARF, but, at the time of the initial accreditation site visit, you will need to illustrate that you have begun collecting and organizing the data, even though that data will not be evaluated during the site visit. The “Relevant Resources” 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 to best collect the data for the outcomes.

Conclusion

The MAERB looks forward to the possibility of working with you as you pursue initial accreditation with CAAHEP. Please feel free to contact the MAERB office after you have reviewed the materials discussed in this Initial Accreditation Packet. Any feedback about the information provided herein is also greatly appreciated.