INFORMATION ABOUT OCCUPATIONAL RISKS

The information below is designed to provide Program Directors of CAAHEP-accredited programs a template to fulfill the new requirement in the 2022 *CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Medical Assisting*. Standard V.A.2 states explicitly that the occupational risks, along with other information, need to be made known to all applicants and students. In other words, an outline/description of the occupational risks needs to be in a place where both prospective students and current students can access. That location could be on the website, in the Program Student Handbook, in the College Catalog, and so on. The key issue is the accessibility of the information.

Programs that are currently accredited will be asked to submit a link by October 1, 2023, to indicate that they are complying with this new Standard. Details on the method of submission will be shared later. After the original submission, that information will be reviewed at the comprehensive site visit.

The verbiage below provides an overview of specific occupational risks. In determining these specific occupational risks, MAERB reviewed materials from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and a wide range of websites about medical assisting.

Below you will find a draft template. The important information about occupational risks is highlighted in yellow; the additional information was provided as context. You may want to vary the wording of the occupational risks, for example, focus on lower back problems rather than ergonomics. Or you might want to exclude one of those items as not relevant. The list is just provided to give you an overview of options as you consider how to best present the occupational risks to your students, so you can tailor the points accordingly. You can determine how you want to best present this information in your program publication.

Please feel free to contact Sarah Marino ([smarino@maerb.org](mailto:smarino@maerb.org)) if you have any questions about this information.

OCCUPATIONAL RISKS

Medical Assisting is a profession with many rewards, as practitioners can perform both administrative and clinical services, filling several roles in a variety of healthcare environments. The Bureau of Labor Statistics clearly outlines that it is a growth field, with an anticipated 18% growth from 2020 to 2030.

Medical Assistants work directly with providers and patients, with the goal of providing healthcare and ensuring patient safety. It is a position with a great deal of responsibility.

As with any healthcare position, there are certain occupational risks that come into play with being a medical assistant, and those hazards include the following:

* Exposure to infectious diseases
* Sharps injuries
* Bloodborne pathogens and biological hazards
* Chemical and drug exposure
* Ergonomic hazards from lifting, sitting, and repetitive tasks
* Latex allergies
* Stress

At the same time, there are protections set up with the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), and those protections are particularly important within a healthcare environment. OSHA has a series of standards that protect the safety of healthcare workers and patients.

Accredited medical assisting programs are required to teach students about the hazards that they face on the job and the protocols that can be put into place to ensure a workplace culture that prioritizes safety.