

## Medical Assisting Clinical Practicum Guide

### Goals of the Clinical Practicum

The goal of the clinical practicum is to prepare students for practice as a CMA (AAMA). The clinical practicum will allow students to:

- Expand their exposure to clinical situations, strategies, and treatment modalities.
- Apply theory to clinical practice.
- Work with and learn from experienced clinicians/preceptors.
- Develop and expand their clinical expertise
- Expand their knowledge of health care systems.
- Collaborate with professionals in other disciplines in the provisions of health care services.
- Develop competencies to function as a CMA (AAMA).

**NOTE: Students must not receive compensation for services provided as a part of their clinical practicum experience.**

### 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.

### **Student Responsibility**

- Meet with clinical faculty preceptor to discuss clinical practicum.
- Complete pre-clinical requirements: CPR BLS certification, completed student physical, completed criminal background check, and completed drug screening.
- Students should never contact any clinical practicum site or preceptor until the clinical placement is confirmed.
- Contact your clinical preceptor or lead practitioner at each site as instructed by the Practicum Coordinator. It is the student's responsibility to monitor and record the number of clinical hours on their time sheet.
- Demonstrate ability to manage progressively complex patient care situations in accordance with his/her academic progression.
- Follow policies and procedures established in the clinical facility and keep the preceptor informed about all learning activities.
- Maintain accurate records of clinical time and experiences by using time sheets, clinical logs and journals.
- Complete the specified time sheets, patient sheets, drug sheets, and daily journals and submit them at designated intervals to the Practicum Coordinator.
- Complete a student evaluation of the clinical site.

### **Practicum Coordinator Responsibility**

- Responsible for identifying and arranging clinical sites for appropriateness of learning experiences for students.
- Contact clinical site managers regarding preclinical requirement for the site.
- A contract is required between Montgomery Community College and each clinical site. The clinical faculty will see to it that the contract is completed. No student may attend clinical until the contract is signed.
- Provide preceptor with learning objectives for the clinical practicum and student evaluation forms.
- Monitor progress of the student and communicate on an ongoing basis with clinical preceptor regarding student progress or lack thereof.
- Review and give feedback on students' clinical logs and carry ultimate responsibility for the evaluation and grading of the student.

## **Preceptor Responsibility**

- Bridges the gap between theory and actual practice.
- Orients student to practice setting, organizational policies, and key personnel.
- Assist student in planning clinical assignments based on course objectives.
- Function as a role model and provide clinical teaching and supervision for the student.
- Provide feedback to the student regarding clinical performance, speak to the student's strengths as well as the areas in which he/she needs to improve.
- Maintains an open line of communication with student's Practicum Coordinator. Inform faculty member immediately if/when student is not progressing at an acceptable pace.
- Provide input regarding clinical evaluation of the student and complete the clinical evaluation form at the end of the semester for the student(s) he/she is precepting. Return the form directly to the Practicum Coordinator.

## **Teaching Strategies for Clinical Preceptors**

### Introduction

The faculty recognizes that role of preceptor is an ongoing developmental process. The preceptor's role in the education of our students is invaluable. Below are a few suggestions for precepting students at the beginning of their clinical experience and then as they become more advanced in their clinical practice:

### **Precepting Beginning Students**

Initially close supervision, observation, and frequent feedback will be necessary. This will assist you in assessing the student's knowledge, skills, and learner styles. Role modeling is extremely important at this level. Directed/guided questioning and use of charting are opportunities to teach. Strategies to instill confidence in performance of the CMA role include: patience, gradually increased expectations, an accepting environment, and assurance that all questions are welcome. The goal of these strategies is to assist beginning students to sharpen assessment and critical thinking skills.

After assessing the student's knowledge, skills, and learning style, the preceptor will determine the level of independence appropriate for this student.

### **HIPAA Requirement**

Students enrolled in the Montgomery Community College Medical Assisting Program recognize the importance of protection of confidential information about patients and their families and of the operations of clinical site where students are placed for clinical experiences. It is the obligation of every student to protect and maintain this confidentiality. All patient information stored via paper or by electronic medical record system is considered confidential. It is the ethical and legal responsibility of all students to maintain and comply with all confidentiality requirements of the clinical sites.

Stating the name of a clinical site in connection with a description of a patient – even without patient name, address, phone number, or social security number – is considered Private Health Information and is a violation of HIPAA.

- Never photocopy, or allow a student to photocopy, parts of a patient chart that include clinic or patient name, clinic or patient address, clinic or patient phone number, or patient social security number.
- Never write, or allow a student to write, patient name, address, phone number, or social security number anywhere but in the official record.
- Never allow the name of the clinical site to be included in students' written work in association with a patient description, write-up, or log.

### Practicum Attendance

- Students must follow agency policies while in the role of a Medical Assisting student. Failure to do so could result in the student being removed from the clinical area, thus, preventing the completion of objectives. (This includes personal and professional behavior.)
- Students are expected to attend **ALL** practicum experiences. This includes all alternate learning experiences scheduled for clinical days in addition to all client care situations. Policies relative to clinical experiences are enforced for all alternate learning activities. Attendance and promptness are essential to satisfactory achievement of clinical objectives.
- Faculty understands that illnesses and emergencies arise which may necessitate the student's absence from the clinical area. The only acceptable reason for students leaving the clinical area early are personal sickness or an emergency. Students must obtain approval from their instructor to leave the clinical area prior to the scheduled departure time. A written medical excuse will be required for all clinical absences. (This must be provided to the Program Director and Practicum Coordinator prior to returning to clinical practicum.) **If a student is going to be absent from clinical practicum, he/she must notify Mrs. Beaman @ (910)573-0531 prior to the scheduled practicum time. It is the student's responsibility to call and talk with Mrs. Beaman, in person, as well as the office manager/clinical preceptor. If the student is unable to reach an instructor immediately, a message should be left with a staff member at the practicum site, as well as on the instructor's voicemail.** If a student leaves early from a clinical rotation, the student will only be counted for the hours they accumulated while in attendance during that day. If a student is, at any time, found to be unprepared as specified under performance criteria, he or she will be told by the clinical preceptor to leave the practicum site. This will constitute a clinical absence.
- A student missing more than two days (16 hours) of the scheduled practicum time may seriously jeopardize the student's clinical status. If this occurs, faculty will review the student's clinical performance, a written conference form (see Clinical Probation Form in Practicum Handbook) will be submitted, and this will result in clinical probation, and the student may be dismissed from the program. If students arrive late or leave early (if you will only be attending ½ day of clinical) then you will not be counted for clinical that day.

Students are required to make up all missed clinical practicum times and dates, as approved by the practicum site.

- The number of clinical absences will be documented on the student's mid-term and final evaluation form and may influence employment opportunities.
- Tardiness will NOT be tolerated in the clinical area. A tardy is constituted by more than 15 minutes late to class or clinical practicum.) Repeated tardiness (more than 2) within a semester, may constitute an unexcused absence and an unsatisfactory clinical performance evaluation.
- Students shall not leave a clinical facility during which direct patient care is assigned. Such behavior may constitute abandonment and will not be tolerated by the Medical Assisting Program Director.
- Students shall arrange approved lunch schedules, when applicable, with program director/practicum coordinator or preceptor/supervisor. One's failure to return to the assigned clinical area without program director/practicum coordinator approval is subject to dismissal from the course and program.
- Students are expected to submit written clinical assignments on time. Late written clinical assignments will result in an unsatisfactory clinical practicum performance. Refer to assignment policy on each course syllabi.

### **Drug/Alcohol Policy**

In compliance with the Federal Drug Free Workplace and Drug Free Schools and Campuses Regulations, MCC prohibits the unlawful use, possession, distribution, manufacture, or dispensation of any controlled substance or alcohol while on campus, facilities leased by the College, or at college-supported functions. Anyone violating this policy will be subject to disciplinary action under the MCC Code of Conduct and the laws of the state of North Carolina.

Any student whose behavior or appearance provides reasonable suspicion that the student is under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances, may be required to submit to drug screening (at their expense) by MCC Medical Assisting Program Director, in consultation with the Dean of Health and Human Services, Vice President of Instruction and Student Services, or the President of the College.

Clinical affiliates that provide clinical experience reserve the right to require testing in compliance with drug and alcohol policies of the institution. A positive result determines that a student may not be able to participate in clinical activities of the program, and subsequently dismissal from the program. Failure to comply with request will result in dismissal from the program. Again, drug testing shall be at the student's expense.

### **Background Check/Drug Screening**

Applicants accepted for admission to health science programs at Montgomery Community College are required to complete a criminal background check, drug screening, and possibly fingerprint check after notification of acceptance and prior to participation in on-site clinical practicum training, which is unpaid. Based on the results of the checks, hospitals or clinical affiliates where the student will participate in on-site training, may deny access to their facility, resulting in the student's inability to complete the clinical portion of training. Students unable to complete the clinical portion or his or her training will be unable to progress in the program. Students are responsible for paying all costs associated with this requirement. Clinical affiliates require all students that participate in clinical activities and patient care at their facility have a criminal record check prior to clinical rotations. This mandate is a recommendation from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

To fulfill contractual agreements with clinical affiliates, all Medical Assisting students are required to submit an official criminal record check prior to participating in clinical rotations. The Criminal Background Checks and Drug Screenings will be performed through Castlebranch. This professional organization will collect and forward the reports to all clinical affiliates. Then in turn, each clinical affiliate will make their decision about granting student clinical privileges on an individual-by-individual basis.

Each clinical affiliate has the right to deny student's access for clinical rotations based upon criminal record. This denial would result in the student's ability to complete the clinical course for the Medical Assisting program and subsequently, the student would not be able to progress in the program.

**Any allegations or charges of a misdemeanor(s) or felony(s) that occur after the criminal background check has been originally submitted must be reported to the Program Director immediately.**

Students may be asked to participate in random drug screenings throughout the program, which will be completed at the student's expense.

### **Professional Dress and Behavior**

- Students represent the Montgomery Community College Medical Assisting Program and must present themselves as ambassadors of the program.
- Reports of unprofessional behavior will result in the student being counseled subject to review by the program director.
- Students should be professionally dressed (clinical site-specific attire) and wear an approved student ID badge.

### **MCC Medical Assisting Student Uniform Guidelines**

- Uniforms must be the color and style determined by the Director of the Medical Assisting Program.
- Uniforms should be clean, without wrinkles, lint, stains, or odors, including fabric softening

perfumes.

- Pant legs should not touch the ground at any time.
- Supplied name tags should be worn at all times and should not be altered in any way.
- Hair styling should be simple, neat and moderate. It must be kept clean and out of the face.
- Hair must be off the collar in the front. Long hair must be worn up or neatly pulled back and fastened securely or braided. No ponytails. No “bed head” styles. Unprofessional hairstyles will result in poor professionalism evaluations.
- Headbands or ribbons are not to be worn. Hair clasps that are inconspicuous may be used to pull long hair back. (Clasps and hair pins should be the same color as your hair. No brightly colored hair clasps.) Large, multi-layered bows are not allowed. Hair ornaments are to be avoided.
- Teeth must be in good state of repair to avoid bad breath and promote good health.
- Breath freshness should be considered a must. Remember that certain foods and smoking can create mouth odor. You need to feel comfortable in your close contact with the client.
- Gum chewing while in uniform is not allowed. If you need to chew gum after a meal to freshen your breath, do so, and dispose of the gum before returning to class or clinical.
- Cosmetics should be skillfully applied and natural looking.
- Heavy eye shadow and false eyelashes are not permitted. No dark or sparkle shades. Keep eyes looking natural.
- The length of the nails should be fairly short and well rounded. Long nails must be cut or the professionalism evaluation will be poor. No airbrushed, artificial, or polished nails are allowed.
- White/black shoes (dictated by uniform color) which afford good foot support are needed. Either lace or slips on styles are appropriate. No open toes or heels.
- The shoes must be kept clean, well-polished and shined and laces are to be kept clean.
- Shoes with run-down heels contribute to foot, leg, and back fatigue. Avoid run down heels.

- White/black support hose or tights are to be worn with the appropriate uniforms.
- Leggings, textured or patterned hose or socks are **not** to be worn.
- A watch with a good second hand (sweep) is needed for patient care.
- Wedding rings and engagement rings are permissible. No other rings are allowed: i.e., no pinkie rings, etc.
- Silver, gold or pearl stud ear jewelry may be worn. NO DANGLING EARRINGS OR LOOPS ARE PERMITTED. NO DOUBLE EARRINGS ARE PERMITTED. Small, flat, gold or silver earrings, which do not hang off the ear are permissible. Only one earring in each ear is allowed.
- A simple gold or silver 15' - 20' necklace may be worn around the neck, if left inside the uniform neck. **The necklace should not be exposed on the outside of the uniform.** Preferably, a necklace will not be worn. They only lend themselves to being easily broken.
- Bracelets or anklets are **not allowed.**
- No visible body piercing. (Eyebrows, tongue, lips, etc.)
- No visible tattoos allowed.
- The approved lab jacket selected for the program may be worn with the uniform when the student would otherwise wear a sweater.
- The lab jacket must be kept clean.
- When representing the program (out of uniform) the student should wear the lab jacket.

**PLEASE NOTE:** OSHA regulations may dictate whether or not a lab jacket is allowed in the clinical area. Please follow the office policy

### **HIPPA and Students**



The questions of whether or not the HIPPA privacy rule prohibits students from accessing patient medical information as a part of their education (practicum) has been raised by many programs.

The answer is that it does not prohibit this access. A medical assisting student access to patient medical information as a part of the practicum experience would be permitted as use or disclosure of protected health information (PHI) for health care operations. Section 164.501 of the rule, defines "health care operations" in a manner that includes training of health care providers and professionals.

The covered entity, physician's office or clinic, must take reasonable steps to limit the PHI used or disclosed to the minimum amount required to accomplish the purpose of the disclosure, and, the covered entity must have in place safeguards to protect the privacy of the information.

Students are part of the covered entity's workforce for HIPAA compliance purposes. Sections 160.103 and 164.530(b) state that students must receive training about the organization's policies and procedures related to PHI. Further such training must be provided within a reasonable period of time after the student begins the externship. The covered entity must document the training and maintain this documentation for six years.