

## Certification

### 1. Graduate from a program

To earn the CMA credential you must first enroll in, and graduate from, a CAAHEP or ABHES accredited medical assisting program. You will attain academic and clinical training in a variety of areas, including the following:

- Human anatomy, physiology and pathology
- Medical terminology
- Keyboarding and computer applications
- Record keeping and accounting
- Coding and insurance processing
- Laboratory techniques
- Clinical and diagnostic procedures
- Pharmacology
- Medication administration
- First aid
- Office practices
- Patient relations
- Medical law and ethics

You also must complete an externship, which is part of the program.

Find a CAAHEP accredited medical assisting program in your home state.

Once you find a program, go to the institution's web site, or contact the director of that program to answer specific questions. Here are sample questions you might want to ask:

- What are tuition costs and financial aid options for the program?
- What are the academic prerequisites for enrolling in the program?
- How long does it take to complete the program?
- What specific topics does the program cover?
- What does the externship involve?

### Take the exam

Once you graduate from the program you must take, and pass, the AAMA CMA Certification Examination. Many useful tools are available to get you ready for it. Follow these steps to prepare for the exam.

- Apply for the exam
- Find your testing center
- Study!

### Apply for the exam

The AAMA Certification/Re certification Examination is offered three times a year in January, June and October (beginning in 2004). Eligible candidates can take it either on the last Friday in January, the last Saturday in June or the fourth Friday in October.

The application deadline for the January exam is October 1 of the preceding year.

The application deadline for the June exam is March 1 of the same year.

The application deadline for the October exam is July 1 of the same year.

If you meet the criteria for either of the following categories, then congratulations! You are eligible to take the CMA Certification Exam:

**Category 1:** Graduating student or recent graduate of a CAAHEP or ABHES accredited medical assisting program.

**Category 2:** Non recent graduate of a CAAHEP or ABHES accredited medical assisting program.

In addition to filling out an application form to take the exam, you must provide certain documentation and pay an enrollment fee. The required documentation depends on your enrollment category. Members of the AAMA and CAAHEP graduates pay a \$95 fee. All others pay \$170.

Membership in the AAMA gives you great benefits that will help you on your career path.

The AAMA will inform you of your application status within 60 days of the examination application deadline. At that time, you also can inquire about your enrollment status via e-mail. Make sure to include the following information in your e-mail:

- Your name
- Your graduation date

- Your accreditation code  
OR  
Your school name, school city and school state.

2. **Find your testing center**

Once the AAMA accepts your exam application, you will be notified of the location of the testing center 6 weeks prior to the examination date. There are over 200 centers throughout the United States.

You can also inquire about your test center via e-mail six weeks before the exam. Make sure to include the following information in your e-mail:

- Your name
- Your graduation date
- Your accreditation code  
OR  
Your school name, school city and school state.

3. **Study!**

The most important thing you can do prior to taking the exam is study for it. Many useful tools are available:

- Obtain study resources. The AAMA has compiled a list of publishers who print useful study materials for the exam. Use this list to obtain current publications in medical assisting that cover administrative and clinical content, anatomy and physiology, medical terminology and laboratory procedures.
- Take a CMA Exam review course if there is one offered in your area by an accredited medical assisting program or by a local chapter of the AAMA. Membership in the AAMA will help you get connected to other medical assistants and medical assisting students. And, you'll receive mailings on local events.
- Take a practice exam. The AAMA provides a practice test, which is organized in the same manner as the actual CMA Certification Exam. This practice test includes 100 questions each for general, administrative and clinical topics. The sample test is included in the booklet titled *A Candidate's Guide to the AAMA CMA Certification/Re certification Examination*. You will receive this guide at least two months prior to the examination date.
- Review the Content Outline for the exam. The *Candidate's Guide* also includes the Content Outline for the CMA Certification Exam. You can use this outline as a roadmap of sorts to help you make sure that you cover all exam topics as you study.