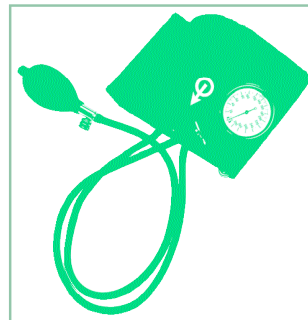
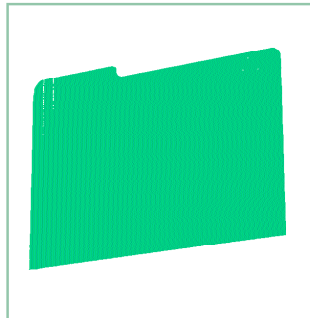


AAMA 2004 Medical Assisting Employment Issues and Salary Survey for Practitioners and Educators

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Medical assistants participated with unprecedented enthusiasm in the 2004 Medical Assisting Employment Issues and Salary Survey for Practitioners and Educators. A record 4,057 survey responses were received, more than double the participation when the survey was last conducted in 1998.

The survey was conducted by mail to a random sample of 10,000 medical assistants, primarily consisting of Certified Medical Assistants (CMAs) who are AAMA members, but also some noncertified medical assistants (non-CMAs) and nonmembers. Also, for the first time ever, the survey was filled out by both medical assisting practitioners and medical assisting educators. The large number of participants ensures that the results have a high degree of statistical reliability.

Statistical reliability and terms used

The overall margin of error for the 4,057 survey responses is $\pm 1.5\%$ at the 95% confidence level. Margin of error describes the statistical reliability of the sample as an estimate of the population. The margin of error should be treated only as an approximation, since margin of error calculations are based on pure random selection which is not achievable in traditional survey settings where response is voluntary. The $\pm 1.5\%$ margin of error applies to overall statistics based on the total respondents to the survey—smaller breakout groups presented throughout the report have higher margins of error. Judgments based on statistics with very low sample sizes should be made with caution.

The following term is used throughout this article:

n or (Base) = The number of respondents upon which the statistics are based. The number of respondents varies by breakout group (data set). For example, (n=19) means that the statistics shown are based on the responses of 19 persons.

Practitioner compensation

Both annual gross salaries and hourly pay rates were collected on the survey, depending on how responding medical assistants were paid. Eighty-three percent of full-time practitioners are paid hourly, while 17% are paid by annual salary (Figure 1). By contrast, 22% of full-time educators are paid hourly, while 78% receive a salary.

Average salary and hourly pay vary for practitioner CMAs and non-CMAs according to their years of experience as a medical assistant. The average annual salary for a full-time practitioner with a CMA in 2004 is \$27,951 (Table 1). By comparison, according to the 1998 survey, full-time practitioner CMAs earned \$21,373. The increase of \$6,578 (30.8%) represents, roughly, a 5% increase per year since 1998. Full-time practitioner CMAs earn an average of \$1,176 more (roughly 4%) than non-CMAs who earn an average of \$26,775 annually.

Full-time hourly practitioner CMAs average \$13.63 per hour, while part-time practitioner CMAs average \$13.34 per hour (Table 2). By contrast, full-time non-CMAs average \$13.06 per hour and part-time non-CMAs average \$12.28 per hour.

The average annual gross salary and hourly pay for full-time CMA practitioners based on geographic region, work setting, practice specialty, and type of practice location are depicted in Table 3 through Table 6.

Figure 1. Hourly versus salaried

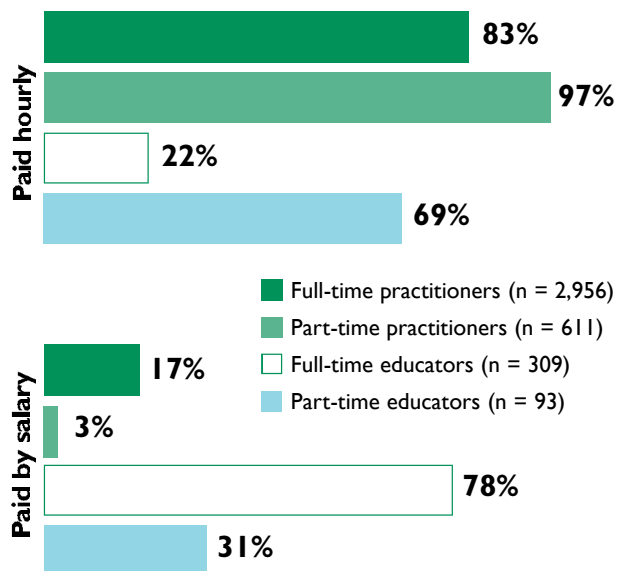


Table 1. Average gross salary for full-time practitioners

	CMAs		Non-CMAs	
	Salary	Number of responses (n)	Salary	Number of responses (n)
Overall	\$27,951	(2,756)	\$26,775	(102)
Years of experience				
< 1 year	\$22,650	(10)	*	*
1–2 years	23,332	(161)	\$22,455	(11)
3–5 years	25,189	(476)	23,684	(19)
6–9 years	26,750	(601)	25,250	(18)
10 years +	29,846	(1,493)	29,480	(50)

*Insufficient response

Table 2. Average hourly pay

	Full-time employees				Part-time employees			
	CMAs		Non-CMAs		CMAs		Non-CMAs	
	Hourly pay	(n)	Hourly pay	(n)	Hourly pay	(n)	Hourly pay	(n)
Overall	\$13.63	(2,414)	\$13.06	(90)	\$13.34	(558)	\$12.28	(30)
Years of experience								
< 1 year	\$10.75	(9)	*		*		*	
1–2 years	11.85	(156)	\$11.20	(10)	\$11.91	(34)	*	
3–5 years	12.60	(454)	11.96	(19)	12.25	(89)	\$10.82	(7)
6–9 years	13.33	(542)	13.43	(20)	12.94	(129)	11.65	(5)
10 years +	14.40	(1,243)	14.12	(38)	14.02	(302)	12.92	(15)

*Insufficient response

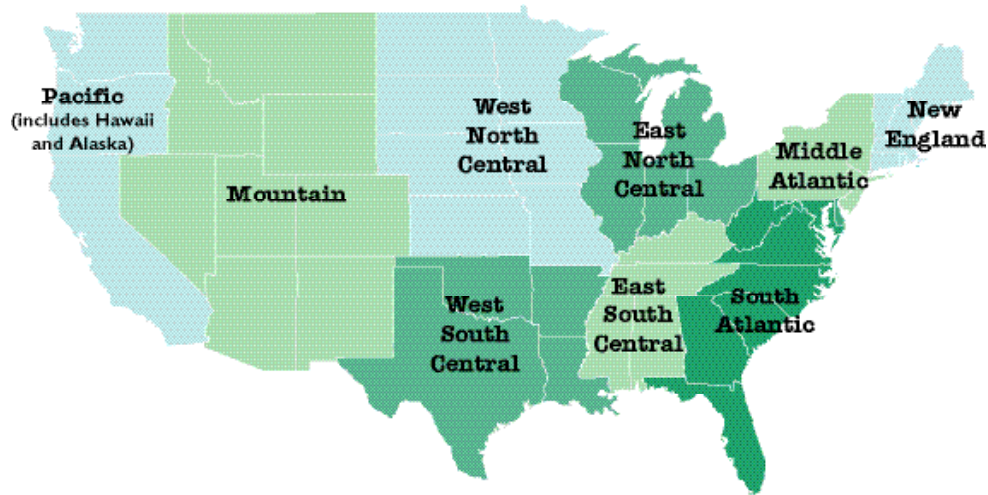


Table 3. Geographic region

Average CMA gross salary and hourly pay by years of experience

Region	Overall	< 1 year	1–2 years	3–5 years	6–9 years	10 + years
New England	\$28,972 \$14.49	* *	\$25,056 \$12.31	\$25,809 \$13.08	\$29,219 \$14.69	\$30,576 \$15.22
Middle Atlantic	30,451 14.60	* *	24,042 12.96	28,710 14.00	27,167 13.34	32,341 15.45
East North Central	26,835 13.27	* *	22,128 11.14	23,939 11.98	25,070 12.80	28,869 14.15
West North Central	27,335 13.65	* *	23,150 12.04	24,477 12.49	26,900 13.53	28,691 14.25
South Atlantic	27,785 13.24	* *	22,922 11.53	24,779 12.14	26,972 13.05	30,218 14.23
East South Central	26,726 12.69	* *	22,000 10.88	25,750 11.78	25,974 12.30	27,953 13.29
West South Central	29,115 13.26	* *	* *	24,600 12.27	26,875 12.54	31,152 14.16
Mountain	27,380 13.40	* *	* *	24,800 12.58	25,426 13.08	29,494 13.98
Pacific	29,995 14.90	* *	27,472 13.76	27,082 14.28	29,468 14.94	31,534 15.42

* Insufficient response

Note: Regions are based on the nine United States Census Divisions.

Table 4. Work setting

Average CMA gross salary and hourly pay by years of experience

	Overall	< 1 year	1–2 years	3–5 years	6–9 years	10 + years
Solo practice	\$28,149 \$13.62	* *	\$22,786 \$11.93	\$23,855 \$12.34	\$26,755 \$13.15	\$30,071 \$14.44
Partnership or group practice	27,907 13.64	\$20,600 *	22,901 11.68	25,455 12.72	26,680 13.31	29,861 14.41
Outpatient clinic	27,460 13.48	* *	24,714 12.63	25,700 12.48	25,728 13.01	29,339 14.49
HMO or other managed care facility	27,365 14.08	* *	* *	23,833 11.89	25,792 13.85	28,568 14.78
Other	28,452 13.39	* *	23,967 12.09	25,158 12.27	28,380 13.64	30,328 14.01

*Insufficient response

Table 5. Practice specialty

Average CMA gross salary and hourly pay by years of experience

	Overall	< 1 year	1–2 years	3–5 years	6–9 years	10 + years
Primary care (eg, internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology, family practice)	\$26,810 \$13.33	\$18,900 \$9.95	\$22,684 \$11.49	\$24,139 \$12.28	\$25,685 \$12.96	\$28,857 \$14.23
Surgical specialties (eg, general surgery, orthopedic surgery, thoracic surgery)	30,285 14.28	* *	25,375 12.06	26,318 12.82	29,019 14.11	31,767 14.87
Other medical specialties (eg, anesthesiology, dermatology psychiatry, urology)	29,774 14.19	* *	23,615 12.67	26,229 13.08	27,736 13.80	31,981 14.98
Other	28,931 13.95	* *	24,325 12.67	26,606 13.10	27,209 13.45	31,056 14.78

*Insufficient response

Table 6. Practice location

Average CMA gross salary and hourly pay by years of experience

	Overall	< 1 year	1–2 years	3–5 years	6–9 years	10 + years
Major metro—Downtown	\$28,407 \$13.79	* *	\$24,722 \$12.35	\$25,383 \$12.50	\$26,854 \$13.58	\$30,913 \$14.75
Major metro—Neighborhood	28,756 13.91	* *	23,730 12.12	25,550 12.51	27,895 13.68	30,622 14.73
Suburb	28,809 14.05	* *	23,864 12.05	26,268 13.24	26,930 13.55	30,693 14.79
Rural	25,743 12.92	* *	21,690 11.23	23,252 12.06	25,221 12.64	27,243 13.60
Other	27,504 13.05	* *	23,800 12.00	25,125 12.30	26,532 12.88	28,906 13.52

*Insufficient response

Educator compensation

Fifty-seven percent of all medical assisting educators surveyed earn an annual gross salary of \$38,000 or more. Not surprisingly, annual salaries for educators varied by years of experience (Table 7).

Table 7. Full-time educator gross salary by years of experience

	Overall	< 1 year	1–2 years	3–5 years	6–9 years	10 + years
	%	%	%	%	%	%
< \$18,000	1	*	*	3	1	*
\$18,000–21,999	2	8	*	*	4	*
22,000–25,999	6	17	13	8	5	1
26,000–29,999	8	17	13	11	11	3
30,000–33,999	10	8	13	17	11	5
34,000–37,999	17	8	30	20	15	13
38,000 +	57	42	30	42	53	77
(Base)	(307)	(12)	(23)	(66)	(75)	(115)

*Insufficient response

Compensation reviews and increases

Roughly three-quarters of medical assisting practitioners and educators get a formal compensation review annually, while the rest get salary reviews at other time intervals or there is “no set time; reviews are done as needed.” On average, full-time CMA practitioners received a 3.92% salary increase at their most recent salary review, while part-time CMA practitioners received 3.48%. On average, full-time educators received a 3.67% salary increase at their most recent salary review, while part-time educators received 3.11%.

Employment benefits

Eighty-six percent of full-time practitioners receive a benefits package from their employer, compared with 47% of part-time practitioners (Figure 2). Major medical, dental, and discount prescriptions are the benefits most often received. Ninety-four percent of full-time educators receive a benefits package from their employer, compared with 32% of part-time educators (Figure 3). For both practitioners

and educators, major medical, dental, and discount prescriptions are the benefits most often received.

Eighty-three percent of medical assisting practitioners indicate their employer offers a retirement plan.

Survey participants were asked if their employers covered their annual AAMA membership dues, AAMA Annual Convention registration fees, and travel and lodging expenses related to attending the convention. Roughly one-third (33%) of medical assistants indicate their employer pays their full AAMA member dues. Full-time medical assisting educators more often have their AAMA dues fully covered 48%.

Of medical assisting respondents, 26% indicate their employers pay for their full registration fees and 16% pay for full travel and lodging expenses. For educators, 54% of employers pay for registration, while 44% pay for travel and lodging.

Practitioner profile

Sixty-four percent of the respondents have earned their certificate/diploma in medical assisting, while 32% earned their associate’s degree in medical assisting (Figure 4).

Figure 2. Insurance benefits received by practitioners

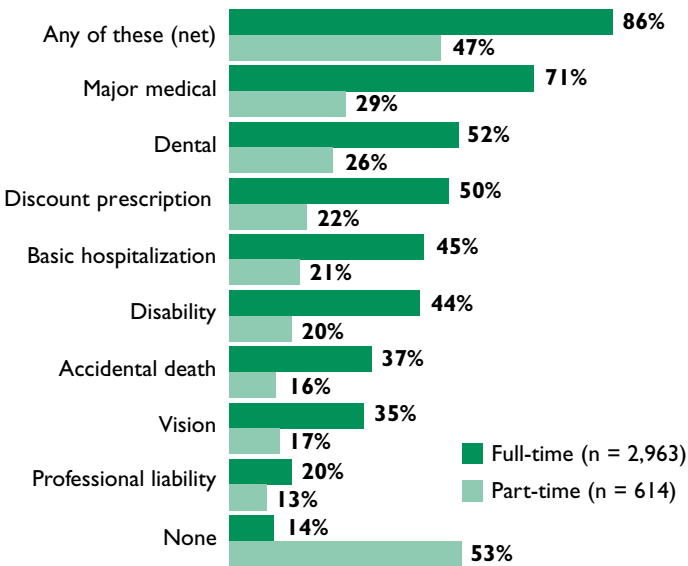


Figure 3. Insurance benefits received by educators

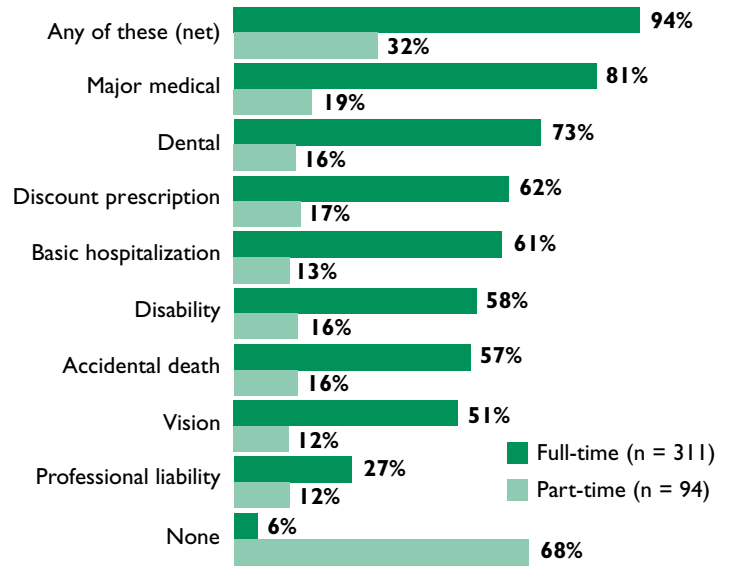


Figure 4. Occupational training background (n = 3,471)

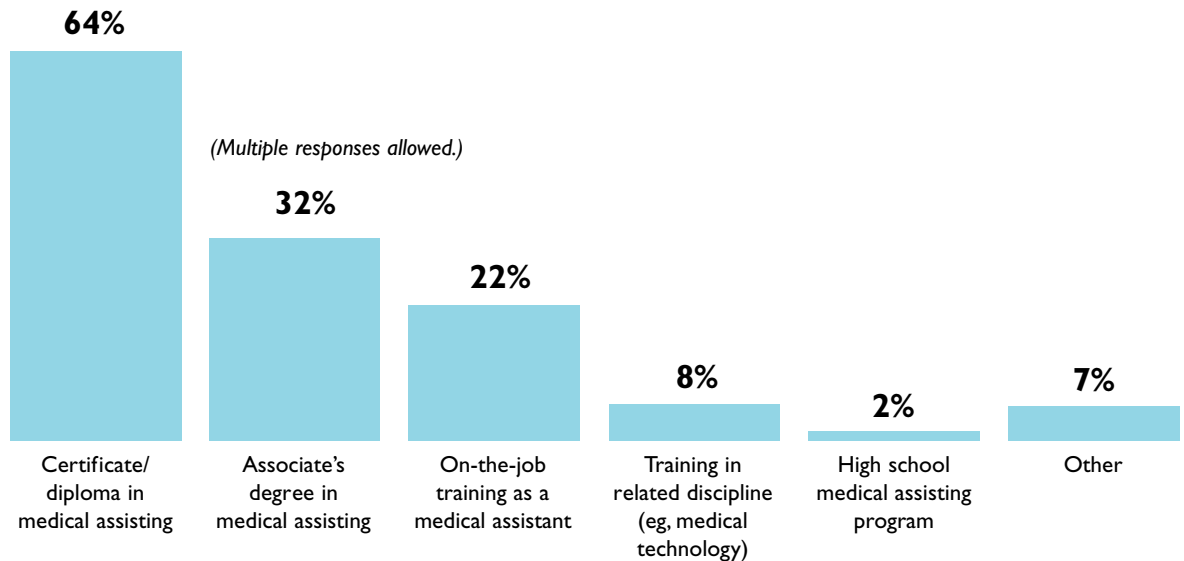


Figure 5. Practice type
(n = 3,533)

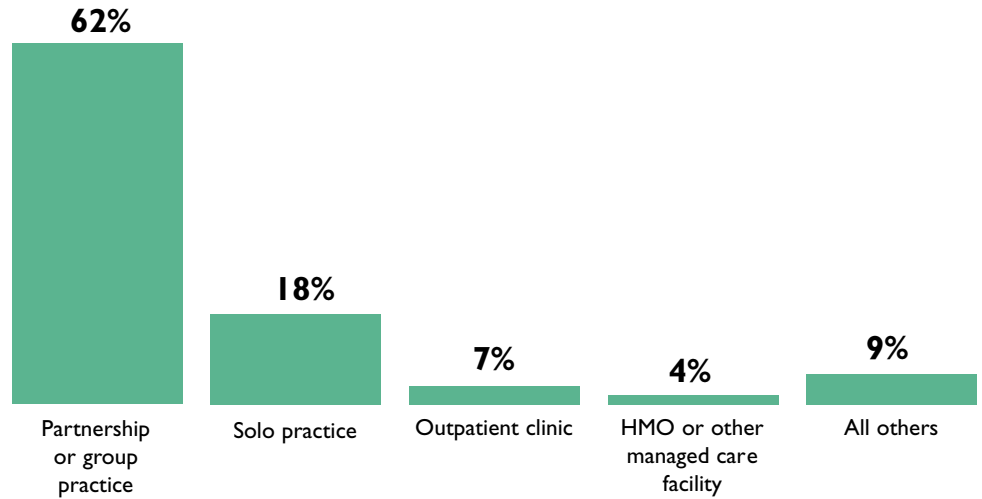


Figure 6. Specialty type
(n = 3,464)

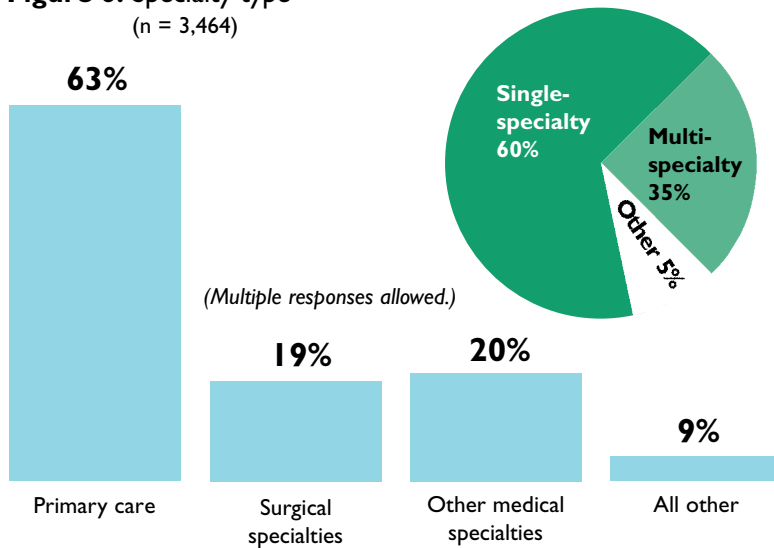
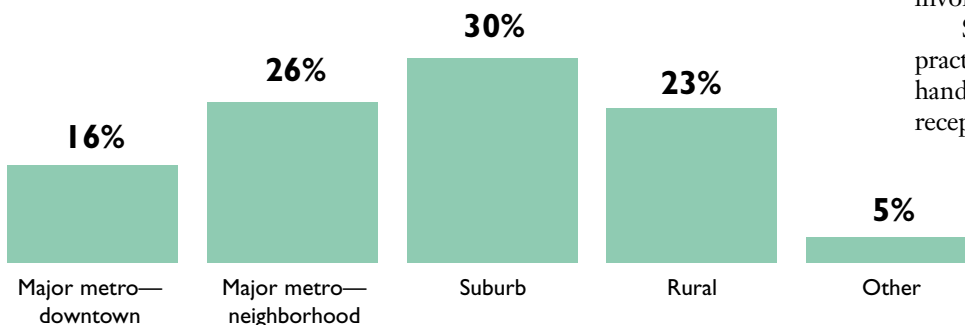


Figure 7. Employment location
(n = 3,470)



Sixty-two percent of respondents work for a partnership or group practice, while 18% work in a solo practice (Figure 5).

Sixty-three percent of practitioners work in an office that specializes in primary care and 60% of practitioners work in a single specialty practice (Figure 6).

Medical assisting practitioners work in a variety of practice locations. Forty-two percent work in a metropolitan area (either downtown or in a neighborhood), 30% work in a suburb, and 23% work in a rural area (Figure 7).

Table 8 shows the average number of persons by type within various practice settings. Solo practices employ the fewest number of persons, while HMOs employ the most.

Professional activities of practitioners

Figure 8 shows the percentage of practitioners that perform various clinical activities within their practice. Eighty-three percent of medical assisting practitioners obtain patient history and vital signs, 78% assist with patient exams, 67% perform injections, and 53% are involved in laboratory work.

Sixty-nine percent of medical assisting practitioners schedule appointments, 57% handle medical records, and 46% perform reception activities (Figure 9).

Table 8. Average number of employees

	Overall	Solo practice	Partnership or group practice	Outpatient clinic	HMO or other managed care facility
Physicians	5.9	1.0	6.5	9.5	11.9
Certified Medical Assistants (CMAs)	3.1	1.5	3.4	3.3	5.8
Noncertified medical assistants	<u>3.4</u>	<u>1.2</u>	<u>4.0</u>	<u>3.3</u>	<u>4.9</u>
Medical assistants subtotal	6.5	2.7	7.4	6.6	10.7
Other nonphysicians	9.1	2.0	10.6	10.0	11.5
Total number of staff persons	21.5	5.7	24.5	26.1	34.1
(Base)	(3,294)	(622)	(2,065)	(235)	(126)

Figure 8. Clinical activities
(n = 3,488)

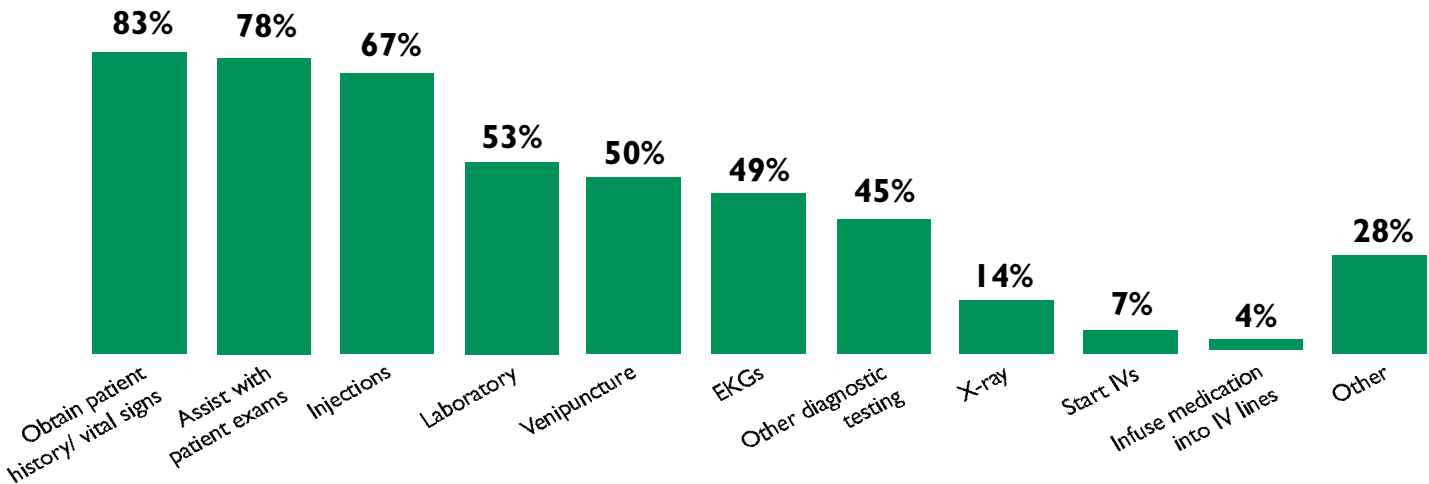
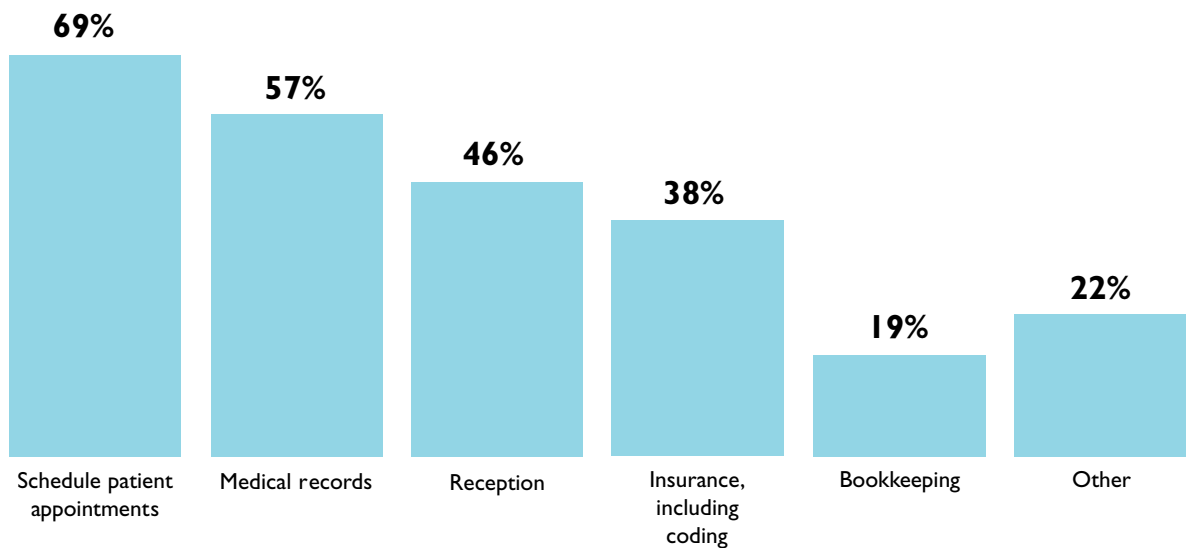


Figure 9. Administrative activities
(n = 3,416)



Forty-nine percent of medical assisting practitioners purchase equipment and supplies and 25% supervise other staff (Figure 10).

Table 9 shows the average percentage of time spent by medical assisting practitioners handling various types of duties. On average, practitioners spend 61.6% of their time handling clinical duties, 25.8% of their time handling administrative duties, and 12.6% of their time in management activities. Within solo practices, practitioners average 51.7% of their time handling clinical duties and 32.1% of their time handling administrative duties. Comparatively, practitioners in other types of practices handle more clinical activities and less administrative work, most notably in HMOs where practitioners spend 78.0% of their time handling clinical duties and 17.0% of their time handling administrative duties. Medical assisting practitioners are more often involved in management activities working in solo practices compared with other types of practices, especially HMOs.

Figure 10. Management activities
(n = 3,366)

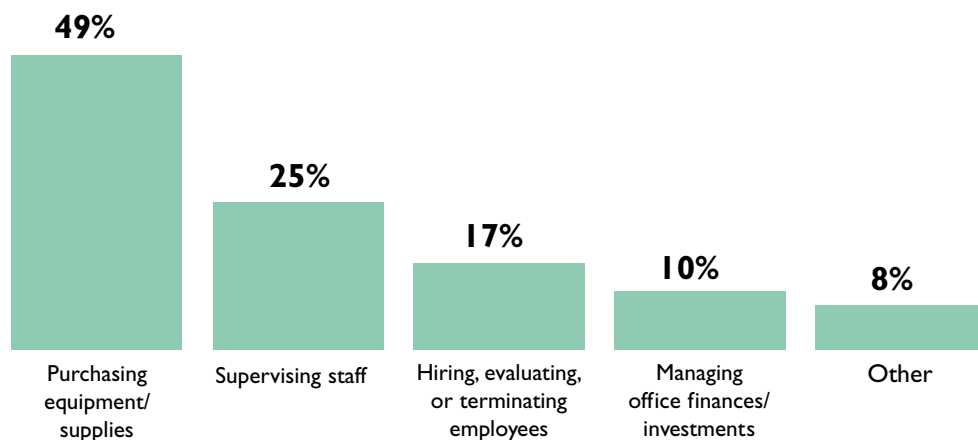


Table 9. Average percent of time spent on activities

	Overall	Solo practice	Partnership or group practice	Outpatient clinic	HMO or other managed care facility
	%	%	%	%	%
Clinical duties	61.6	51.7	65.0	64.8	78.0
Administrative duties	25.8	32.1	23.2	25.2	17.0
Management (clinical)	5.3	6.7	5.0	5.1	3.5
Management (administrative)	<u>7.3</u>	<u>9.5</u>	<u>6.8</u>	<u>4.9</u>	<u>1.5</u>
Management Subtotal	12.6	16.2	11.8	10.0	5.0
TOTAL Time	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Base)	(3,432)	(603)	(2,132)	(250)	(145)



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The AAMA 2004 Medical Assisting Employment Issues and Salary Survey for Practitioners and Educators was handled by Leever Research Services, an independent association market research firm in Chicago, Ill. The American Association of Medical Assistants thanks all the participants who made the 2004 survey its best salary survey to date. You may access copies of this survey online at www.aama-ntl.org or on Fax-On-Demand at 800/899-6813.