



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF MEDICAL ASSISTANTS®

Membership Recruitment and Retention

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Mission

The mission of the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) is to provide the medical assistant professional with education, certification, credential acknowledgement, networking opportunities, scope-of-practice protection, and advocacy for quality patient-centered health care.

Notice

All AAMA documents have been developed in accordance with policies established by the AAMA Board of Trustees (BOT). Any discrepancies in policy statements inconsistent with current policies should be brought to the attention of the AAMA Executive Office and the BOT. The AAMA BOT will make the final decision on discrepancies. The AAMA BOT apologizes for any inconvenience this may cause.

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Introduction

Membership recruitment and retention is arguably the most important job in association management. To a chapter or state leader, the importance of membership in the AAMA is clear and the benefits are obvious. Getting other medical assistants to recognize and share those views can take some work. Membership in a professional association may be difficult to market to some potential members if:

- They don't recognize a need for the benefits and services of the association;
- They are benefiting from services provided by the association—such as lobbying, marketing of the profession, and maintaining the Continuing Education registry—without being a member;
- They would rather pay the non-member price for any products and services rather than be involved in an organization;
- They are concerned about the cost and time commitment; or
- They do not value the intangible benefits of professional association membership.

This manual has been prepared by the AAMA Membership Committee as a tool for local chapters and state societies to utilize with their membership efforts.

Meeting Member Needs

Members join associations for different reasons. The AAMA Member Needs Survey indicates that the number one reason to join the AAMA is the opportunity for education. Additional reasons include access to the publication *Medical Assisting Today*, career enhancement, protection of our right to practice, and saving money on the cost of certification and recertification. Of particular interest is the AAMA's [Compensation and Benefits Report](#) (go to the "Medical Assisting" tab on the AAMA website and then select "Compensation and Benefits"). The page also features employment projections for medical assistants from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

State societies or local chapters need to know what members want regarding their educational, communication, and career opportunities, and then implement plans to meet those needs. What worked well yesterday may not be the answer in today's ever-changing world. Time and priorities affect member (and non-member) decisions.

AAMA Website

The information in this manual can be supplemented by visiting the "Volunteer Resources" tab on the AAMA website at aama-ntl.org. Access the "Leader's Center" for resources to help meet your membership goals. Both members and non-members will find valuable information on the AAMA website by selecting the "Education and Events" tab, which comprises CEUs, the e-Learning Center, state society conferences, the AAMA Annual Conference, and Medical Assistants Recognition Week. Also available on the AAMA website under the Publications tab is *Medical Assisting Today*, state scope of practice regulations, and the blog "Legal Eye on Medical Assisting." The website underwent a major redesign in late 2024 and is constantly being updated to ensure accuracy and

provide helpful information to members and potential members alike.

State Society and Chapter Websites

A number of state societies and some local chapters have their own websites and have linked them to the AAMA website. Membership chairs are urged to consult these sites periodically for helpful information. In addition to the ability to connect to the AAMA website with just a click, you are expanding your state society website by being available to professionals looking for contact information for state leaders. Some states are utilizing generic e-mail addresses to maintain individual privacy while remaining available to outside contacts. Some state societies and local chapters also have a presence on Facebook, to provide an additional opportunity for information sharing and membership recruitment and retention.

Membership Retention

After recruitment, membership retention may be a greater challenge than attracting new members. One of the more effective ways to retain members is to ensure they feel involved and valued from the beginning of their membership—which means that appropriate orientation of new members is an essential facet of membership strategy.

Orientation of New Members

The fear of beginning something new is one we all have felt. A great deal of anxiety can result from being part of a new group or organization while not fully understanding its policies and procedures.

To help address this concern, be sure to provide each new member with a packet that contains:

- A welcome letter from the president or membership chair
- Local chapter information with meeting dates and times
- Chapter and/or state society bylaws and standing rules
- A list of membership benefits
- A list of officers and committee chairs and their contact information
- A description of the duties and functions of officers and standing committees
- Website addresses for the AAMA and State Society/Chapter
- Selected segments of the AAMA website
- Social media platforms (Facebook, X, LinkedIn, the AAMA YouTube channel, and Instagram).

The AAMA provides membership for every stage of a medical assistant's career. See the classes of membership on the AAMA website under the "Join the AAMA" tab. This section also contains a membership application and a dues section.

Be sure to welcome new members at each meeting and invite them to sit near and become acquainted with the officers and committee chairs.

Assign each new member a mentor/leader navigator from the local chapter/state society who can answer questions and assist when possible. The first six months of membership represents an

orientation period for new members. During this time, it is important for veteran members to make themselves known to the newcomers. Many new members may drop out very soon after joining if they do not feel involved or their voices valued. They may have an idea that could be beneficial to the group but lack the knowledge as to how the organization functions and the appropriate channels to follow to share their idea. They may find that the formalities of meetings too intimidating in the beginning. Having a mentor/leader navigator can help ease them into participating more fully in the meeting.

Create an environment that encourages new members to participate. Asking for questions and soliciting ideas from all attendees lets new members know that this is the time to speak up. Veteran members can encourage and foster such participation. Sometimes it takes a new member to understand the problems/challenges and offer fresh alternatives or solutions. Take time to listen to new members and make them feel their contribution is valued.

A good way to help new members feel involved is to ask them to serve on a committee (the AAMA website lists volunteer opportunities to serve on AAMA committees, strategy teams, and task forces). One of the purposes of committee service is to gain experience and knowledge in preparation for future leadership roles. Serving on a committee also allows a new member to meet others and to learn about the AAMA while developing their leadership skills. Provide new members with information about the duties and functions of officers and committees and how to participate. The *Chapter Management Guide* and *State Management Guide* on the AAMA website have sample descriptions of officer duties and committee functions. These may be downloaded from the AAMA website or saved on a device for future reference. Always place new members on a committee with experienced members so they do not feel overwhelmed. Initially, let them participate by “showing up.” Full participation may come later as the new member’s comfort level increases.

Communication

Communication among Members

Lack of communication could be one of the major pitfalls within the association. It is the President’s job to see that officers and committee chairs are kept informed. In turn, it is the responsibility of the officers to see that the chapter membership is kept informed. Finally, all members should endeavor to keep others in the state informed. If the chain of communication is broken, members of the group could feel alienated.

The incoming President should provide officers, committee chairs, and advisors with an outline of their duties. In return, the President should receive reports from these individuals outlining plans and progress made during a specified period of time. Members of the board are in a leadership capacity; to lead the group effectively, they must keep the group informed.

Publicity

Publicizing the chapter’s/state’s activities in the local area is an effective way to involve members

and to attain recognition for and awareness of the group. Check with local newspapers, radio, and TV stations about public service announcements and use this as a means to broadcast information about upcoming activities, especially public-facing events. Develop a relationship with local group practices employing medical assistants; medical associations/societies; hospital networks; medical assisting educational programs; and physician management associations, such as the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA), Healthcare Leaders Association (HLA), and Professional Association of Health Care Office Management (PAHCOM). Also be sure to use AAMA social media sites to communicate with members. The *Chapter Management Guide* and *State Management Guide* both contain sections on publicity, with a sample press release and ideas for promoting Medical Assistants Recognition Week (MARWeek). Additional ideas for MARWeek are available under the “Education and Events” tab on the AAMA website.

Communication Ideas

Take an objective look at the meetings. Is all important correspondence presented to the group? Are all announcements (local, state, and national) included in the agenda? Do all members know what is happening within the nation regarding our profession? A periodic newsletter, group e-mail, or e-blast keeps members informed of local activities. Include state society officers and other chapters in the state on the mailing list for the chapter newsletter. Your Facebook and other social media platforms are also excellent methods to get information to your members efficiently and expeditiously.

Means of Communication

Encourage members to provide e-mail addresses and/or phone numbers and send announcements via e-blasts or texts. An effective e-mail/telephone/text committee keeps members informed.

Resolution of Problems

In any organization where democratic procedures are being followed, controversy may occur. A group of members will not agree with others one hundred percent of the time. But remember that, although the majority rules, the minority has a right to be heard. Base all discussions on facts, not emotions. Facts, examples, and experiences are valid in discussion and deserve a full hearing. Also, be aware of the other person's feelings and keep all comments on a professional level.

Meetings

Programs

Educational programs offer an excellent incentive for members to attend meetings, particularly if the program has education approved for AAMA CEU credit. The education and/or program committee should be aware of its role within the chapter. Provide an e-mail address/contact information for the education chair, and invite members to send ideas for additional topics and recommendations for future speakers.

Many organizations and agencies in your local area have programs and speakers available for lectures and seminars, such as the Cancer Society, American Heart Association, Arthritis Foundation, Blue Cross, public health department, and area hospitals. Use the state education committee for advice and assistance. Visit the AAMA website for a printable copy of the *Program Planners Guide* for guidance in creating and seeking approval for AAMA CEU programs.

Business meetings

Most chapters have a brief business meeting along with an educational program. The business meeting may be at the completion of the educational program or occur in between educational programs if more than one is being presented. Most of the chapter's business may be considered

during a board meeting at a different time. Some chapters find that a full board meeting is needed only a few times a year, such that business can be completed during a brief meeting following the regular chapter meeting.

If a business meeting is held in conjunction with an education session, avoid lengthy discussions on internal issues. When planning a meeting, allow time for the education speaker and for the business meeting. The *State Management Guide* and *Chapter Management Guide* include guidelines and best practices for conducting meetings.

After the meeting, send new members in attendance a note, text, or e-mail thanking them for their attendance and informing them of the next meeting. A good, cost-effective communication measure is to ask all members to provide an e-mail address for an e-blast or phone number for a text message to “save the date.”

Intangible AAMA Benefits

Networking Opportunities

Educational and social activities planned by the local chapter, state societies, and the national association provide many opportunities to meet with other credentialed medical assistants to share ideas and discuss common problems.

Staying in the Information Loop

The AAMA is recognized as the resource for information concerning all aspects of the profession of medical assisting and professional credentialing. For example, the association conducts a salary and benefit survey periodically to provide information to medical assistants and employers.

Public Affairs

The AAMA represents the medical assisting profession at hearings and national health meetings and conferences to ensure that medical assistants have a voice in the rapidly changing health care system. AAMA volunteer leaders and staff monitor state and federal legislation, regulations, and judicial and administrative decisions that could have an impact on medical assistants' right to practice. They also advocate for the medical assisting profession and keep members informed of any possible changes in practice rights. The AAMA's legal counsel is available to members, legislators, and medical boards to answer scope of practice questions specific to medical assisting. Another useful resource in this regard is the Executive Director's "Legal Eye" blog, available via the AAMA website, which reports on current issues affecting medical assisting practice.

Setting Standards

The AAMA conducts an occupational analysis periodically to provide current information and data on the scope of practice for medical assisting. This effort helps define the profession and is the

cornerstone for developing curricula in medical assisting programs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), as well as to revise the CMA (AAMA) Certification/Recertification Examination Content Outline and the programs and products developed for continuing education.

The AAMA help ensure quality in the medical assisting profession through the work of the education boards.

Strategic Plan

The AAMA Strategic Issues Plan (SIP), updated on a schedule determined by the Board of Trustees, is available for download on the AAMA website under the members only section.

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