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Continuing education requirements for medical assistant-certified credential in WA

The AAMA and WSSMA submit comments supporting the proposed bill

The following comments—regarding a bill (HB 2351)¹ introduced in 2020 in the Washington State House of Representatives—were submitted to the House Health Care & Wellness Committee on January 27, 2020. Information on the bill’s status is available on a dedicated webpage² of the Washington State Legislature website. References have been added to the original letter.

These comments are being submitted by the American Association of Medical Assistants® (AAMA) and the Washington State Society of Medical Assistants (WSSMA), an affiliated state society of the AAMA, in support of Washington State House Bill [HB] 2351, an act establishing continuing education requirements for the medical assistant-certified credential. ...

A primary public policy objective of both the AAMA and the WSSMA is to protect patients from medical assisting services

that do not meet the standard of care and therefore jeopardize their health, safety, and welfare. Although the training and examination requirements for medical assistants-certified ([outlined in] WAC [Washington Administrative Code] 246-827-0200³) provide evidence of the knowledge and skills of [medical assistants-certified], the lack of mandatory continuing education requirements diminishes the patient protection effectiveness of the [medical assistant-certified] statute and the attendant regulations of the Washington State Department of Health.

WAC 246-827-200(2)(a) requires an applicant for a medical assistant-certified credential to meet the following examination requirements:

- (2) Pass a medical assistant certification examination, approved by the secretary, within five years of submitting an initial

application. A medical assistant certification examination approved by the secretary means an examination that:

- (a) Is offered by a medical assistant program that is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)³

The NCCA *Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs* (i.e., *Standards*) contain the following requirements:

Standard 22: Maintaining Certification

The certification program must require periodic recertification.

Essential Elements:

...

- C. Certification must be time limited with a specified beginning and end date to the period of certification. The recertification period selected must be supported by a rationale

that reflects how the relevant knowledge and skills for the certificants and for the field may change over time.

D. Programs applying for accreditation must require periodic recertification for all certificants.⁴

Consequently, in addition to the patient protection benefits of HB 2351, the enactment of this legislation would bring the Washington [medical assistant-certified] law into conformity with the *NCCA Standards*.

The following sentence from HB 2351 is significant:

A medical assistant-certified who obtains a national credential by passing the examination required under RCW 18.360.040(1)(a)

meets the continuing education requirement established in this section by completing the continuing education necessary to maintain [their] national credential.¹

By deeming the continuing education requirements of the NCCA-accredited medical assisting credentials as satisfying the [medical assistant-certified] continuing education requirements, HB 2351 promotes regulatory economy and minimizes the cost to the Washington State Department of Health of implementing the continuing education requirements of this legislation.

The [AAMA] and the [WSSMA] reiterate their support of House Bill 2351 and urge its enactment. ♦

Questions about these comments may be directed to Donald A. Balasa, JD, MBA, at dbalasa@aama-ntl.org.

References

1. Establishing Continuing Education Requirements for Medical Assistants-Certified, HR 2351, 66th Leg (Wash 2020). January 1, 2021. Accessed March 17, 2020. <http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/House%20Bills/2351.pdf?q=20200318164>
2. HB 2351 - 2019-20. Washington State Legislature. Accessed March 17, 2020. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/bills/summary?BillNumber=2351&Year=2019&Initiative=false>
3. Wash Admin Code § 246-827-0200. Accessed March 17, 2020. <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=246-827-0200>
4. National Commission for Certifying Agencies. *Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs*. Institute for Credentialing Excellence; 2014. Accessed March 24, 2020. https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.napo.net/resource/resmgr/Docs/2016_NCCA_Standards.pdf

