



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF MEDICAL ASSISTANTS®

20 N. WACKER DR., STE. 1575
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60606

Thank you for your inquiry concerning what tasks are delegable to medical assistants under Alabama law.

Although medical assistants are not mentioned specifically in the statutes or regulations of Alabama, Section 34-21-1 of the Alabama Law Regulating the Practice of Registered and Practical Nursing defines the practices of professional and practical nursing in broad terms. Section 34-21-6 of the statute "...[D]oes not prohibit:

...persons, including nursing aides, orderlies and attendants, carrying out duties necessary for the support of nursing services, including those duties which involve supportive nursing services performed in hospitals and elsewhere under the direction of licensed physicians or dentists, or under the supervision of professional nurses licensed hereunder..."

It is my legal opinion that this language authorizes physicians to delegate a reasonable scope of clinical and administrative tasks (including venipuncture/phlebotomy and performing intramuscular, intradermal, and subcutaneous injections [including immunizations/vaccinations]) to knowledgeable and competent unlicensed professionals such as medical assistants working under their direct authority in outpatient settings. Tasks which constitute the practice of medicine, or which state law permits only certain health care professionals to perform, or which require the exercise of independent professional judgment or the making of clinical assessments, evaluations, or interpretations, however, may not be delegated to unlicensed professionals such as medical assistants.

To my knowledge, there is nothing in Alabama law which forbids supervising physicians from delegating tasks to medical assistants through intermediary personnel, such as nurse practitioners, physician assistants, registered nurses, or other individuals capable of undertaking subdelegatory responsibility. It is advisable to have the delegating physician authorize in writing which tasks are being delegated to the medical assistants, and which health professionals are being assigned by the physician to oversee the medical assistants.

The Alabama Board of Nursing has incorporated into its regulations (page 6-18 of the attached) a statement that registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical nurses (LPNs) may accept verbal/telephone orders from medical assistants who are certified or registered.

I hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions or need additional assistance.

Donald A. Balasa, JD, MBA
CEO and Legal Counsel
dbalasa@aama-ntl.org



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