Anesthesiologist Assistant (C.A.A.)

Career Description

• Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants (CAAs) work under the direction of an Anesthesiologist (a physician – either a MD or DO) to design and operate anesthesia care plans.
• They operate anesthesia equipment; monitor patients before, during, and after anesthesia; and assist in life saving measures such as CPR and life support.
• Anesthesiologist assistants usually work in hospitals and may serve on-call, evening, and/or weekend assignments as needed.
• Responsibilities include taking patient histories; performing physical exams; administering necessary lab tests; preparing the patient to be monitored as directed by the physician; assisting with preparatory procedures; inserting venous, arterial, and other invasive catheters; testing anesthesia equipment; maintaining anesthesia levels; airway management including intubation; working with intensive care units and pain clinics; and preparing case summaries.
• AAs work exclusively within the field of anesthesia.
• Although unfamiliar to many people, AA programs began in 1969.

Becoming an Anesthesiologist Assistant

• Complete a bachelor's degree.
• A two-year masters level anesthesiologist assistant program is required (programs typically are 24-28 months).
• Programs focus on course work that enhances basic knowledge in science with emphasis on cardiovascular, respiratory, renal, nervous, and neuromuscular systems.
• Programs should be accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Allied Health Educational Programs (CAAHEP).
• The program should also work closely with a medical school and have some instructors who are board-certified physicians in anesthesiology.
• During the clinical portion of training (over 2000 hours), students typically administer as many as 600 different anesthetics during a variety of surgeries.
• A certification exam administered by the National Commission for the Certification of Anesthesiology Assistants (NCCAA) must be passed.
• AAs are required to complete 40 hours of continuing medical education (CME) credits every two years and to pass the qualifying exam every 6 years.

Prerequisite Courses

• AA programs do not have a standard set of requirements, but many similarities in their requirements do exist.
• The initial courses are similar to other professional health care fields such as MD and DO programs, but some further courses are required.
• Grades of B- or higher are generally required in these prerequisite courses.
• Most schools require the classes listed below.

Common Prerequisite Courses (pre-reqs determined by each program but similar to this list)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Purdue Equivalents (specific courses may vary by major)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Intro Biology with lab</td>
<td>BIOL 11000 &amp; 11100 or 13100 &amp; 23100 &amp; 23200 (lab)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anatomy &amp; Physiology with lab</td>
<td>BIOL 20300-20400 or 30100-30200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>General with lab</td>
<td>CHM 11500-11600 or 12901 (11500 credit exam but check with schools)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organic with lab</td>
<td>CHM 25500-25600 or 26100-26200 or 26505-26605 or MCMP 20400-20500</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biochemistry</td>
<td>BCHM 30700 or 56100 or CHM 33300 or 33900 or CHM 53300 or MCMP 20800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>General with lab</td>
<td>PHYS 22000-22100 or 23300-23400 or equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>ENGL 10600 or 10800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Calculus &amp; Statistics</td>
<td>Calculus: MA 22300, 16100, or 16500 or equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>STAT 30100 or 50300 or equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional</td>
<td>Other Recommended Courses</td>
<td>Medical Terminology, Cell Biology, Microbiology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>Pre-Med Planning Seminar</td>
<td>BIOL 39600-0 credit 10 week class covering how to apply to health professions programs</td>
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Job Outlook

- Anesthesiologist Assistants are in high demand because of rising health care costs.
- The job outlook is considered excellent.
- Salaries typically start at $110,000-120,000.
- Most students leave programs with multiple job offers before graduation and are often offered generous signing bonuses.
- AAs are not licensed to practice in all states so this may be a consideration depending on where you are hoping to live. The federal government recognizes and uses AAs. Both the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs authorize the use of AAs to practice under the TRICARE insurance program.
- Currently AAs can practice in Veterans facilities and Defense facilities nationally and in 17 states either under their own licensure or under the delegatory authority of a physician (much as physician assistants practice). This map indicates the practice distribution of AAs: https://aaaa.memberclicks.net/assets/aaaa%20work%20states%20%20pdf%20map%20january%202015%20hi%20rez.pdf

Preparation

- Shadow an AA and/or an Anesthesiologist to make sure this is the right field and you truly understand what an AA does.
- Take an aptitude test. Either the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and/or the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) (for example, Case Western Reserve University and University of Missouri-Kansas City require the MCAT).
- Research where AAs are currently licensed to practice as this may limit where you can live.

Applying

- There are 12 accredited AA programs.
- Application for programs is made through the Central Application Service for Anesthesiologist Assistant Programs (CASAA) though you may also need to fill out online materials through their graduate school as well.
- Each program has varying application requirements.
- Early application is recommended as there are only a few programs with relatively small classes.

Fee Assistance

- At this time, CASAA does not offer fee assistance or waivers.
- GRE Fee Reduction Program https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/fees/reductions/
- MCAT Fee Assistance through the AAMC https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/fee-assistance-program/

More Information

- CASAA (Application Service) https://casaa.liaisoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login
- American Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants http://www.anesthetist.org
- American Society of Anesthesiologists http://asahq.org

Programs in the Region

- Indiana University Indianapolis, IN https://medicine.iu.edu/departments/anesthesia/education-programs/ms/
- Case Western Reserve University Cleveland, OH http://www.case.edu/medicine/msa-program/
- Medical College of Wisconsin Milwaukee, WI http://www.mcw.edu/Medical-School/Home/Master-of-Science-in-Anesthesia-Program.htm
- University of Missouri-Kansas City Kansas City, MO http://med.umkc.edu/MSA/

Information for this career guide came from the above websites and Explore Health Careers www.explorehealthcareers.org.