

ANESTHESIOLOGIST ASSISTANT



CERTIFIED ANESTHESIOLOGIST ASSISTANT (CAA) CERTIFIED NURSE ANESTHETIST (CRNA)

WHAT IS A CERTIFIED ANESTHESIOLOGIST ASSISTANT?

- Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants (CAAs) are highly skilled health professionals who work under the direction of licensed anesthesiologists to implement anesthesia care plans. CAAs work exclusively within the anesthesia care team environment as described by the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA). All CAAs possess a premedical background, a baccalaureate degree, and also complete a comprehensive didactic and clinical program at the graduate school level. CAAs are trained extensively in the delivery and maintenance of quality anesthesia care as well as advanced patient monitoring techniques. The goal of CAA education is to guide the transformation of qualified student applicants into competent health care practitioners who aspire to practice in the anesthesia care team.
- Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants and certified registered nurse anesthetists are both defined as “non-physician anesthetists” within the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services section of the Code of Federal Regulations. aaa.memberclicks.net

WHAT DO CAAS AND CRNAS DO?

Under the medical direction and supervision of an anesthesiologist, the CAAs functions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Making the initial approach to a patient of any age in any setting to obtain a preliminary preanesthetic health history, perform an appropriate preanesthetic physical examination and record pertinent data in an organized and legible manner for review by an anesthesiologist. These activities help to define the patient’s current physical status as it relates to the planned anesthetic.
- Performing or assisting in the conduct of diagnostic laboratory and related studies as appropriate, such as drawing arterial and venous blood samples.
- Establishing noninvasive and invasive routine monitoring modalities as delegated by the responsible anesthesiologist.
- Assisting in the application and interpretation of advanced monitoring techniques such as pulmonary artery catheterization, electroencephalographic spectral analysis, echocardiography and evoked potentials.
- Assisting in inducing, maintaining and altering anesthesia levels, administering adjunctive treatment and providing continuity of anesthetic care into and during the postoperative recovery period.

CRNAs have the main responsibility of administering anesthesia and monitoring patients through their surgeries. CRNA functions also include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Completing physical assessments of each patient
- Discussing the surgery and recovery with the patient prior to the procedure
- Preparing and administering the patient-

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specific amount of anesthesia needed for the procedure

- Maintaining the patient's anesthesia levels during surgery
- Ensuring proper anesthesia recovery for patients until patients are transferred to care units

WORKING CONDITIONS AND SALARY

- Anesthesiologist assistants work in hospitals and surgery centers under the direction of a licensed anesthesiologist. The profession maintains a typical work week with options for on-call, evening or weekend assignments.
- Anesthesiologist assistants are in high demand, because of the need for skilled personnel to deliver anesthesia. Anesthesiologist assistants operate as physician extenders, performing critical tasks that ensure the safety of the patient and promote optimal health outcomes.
- The average salary range for anesthesiologist assistants is \$95,000-180,000.

When employed within the same department and when possessing the same job description and experience level within the anesthesia care team, CAAs and CRNAs are compensated with identical salary and benefit packages. (Per AAAA). aaaa.memberclicks.net

THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS FOR CAAS AND CRNAS

- Upon completion of an accredited nurse anesthetist program, a student may become certified by passing the Council for Certification of Nurse Anesthetists certification exam. This examination is an adaptive computer examination consisting of 90-160 questions. Forty hours of approved Continuing Education Units (CEU) are required every two years in order to recertify. To be recertified, nurse anesthetists are not required to pass any further testing. The NCCRNA has proposed a new recertification process requiring CRNAs to pass a recertification exam every 8 years beginning in 2015. If this measure is adopted all CRNAs will have passed a recertification exam by 2023.

- Upon completion of an accredited AA program, a student may become certified by passing the NCCAA examination. The examination is administered and scored by the National Board of Medical Examiners as part of services contracted to NCCAA. Performance information for test items and the overall exam are provided by NBME. NCCAA uses this data to set the passing score and provides notification of certification. NCCAA awards a time-limited certificate to each candidate who successfully completes the Certifying Examination.
- To re-certify, an AA must complete 40 hours of CME every two years and register the activities with NCCAA. Additionally, AAs must take the Continuing Demonstration of Qualification Exam every six years. aaaa.memberclicks.net

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- American Academy of Anesthesiologists Assistants anesthetist.org
- The Association of Anesthesiologist Assistant Program Directors aaapd.org
- Anesthesia Patient Safety Foundation apsf.org
- Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs caahep.org
- American Society of Anesthesiologists asahq.org
- National Commission for Certification of Anesthesiologist Assistants aa-nccaa.org
- American Association of Nurse Anesthetists aana.com
- The CRNA thecrna.com
- Registered Nurse RN registerednurses.com

