

■ Anesthesiologist Assistants

Association of Anesthesiologist Assistant Education Programs



Anesthesiologist Assistants – Who Are They?

The Certified Anesthesiologist Assistant (CAA) is a highly skilled medical professional who plans and delivers anesthesia care as an essential member of the Anesthesia Care Team (ACT). The ACT is focused on a patient-centric approach that provides each patient with the safest and most effective model of care. Within the ACT, each CAA works as a physician extender who delivers a variety of care techniques working directly with the supervision of expert physician anesthesiologists to create and implement anesthesia care plans for patients.

Anesthesiologist Assistants – What Do They Do?

The professional CAA's responsibilities include:

- Eliciting a pre-anesthesia health history and performing a physical examination
- Establishing patient monitoring devices and intravenous access
- Application and interpretation of advanced monitoring techniques including pulmonary artery catheterization and echocardiography

- Induction, maintenance, and emergence of a patient's anesthetic
- Securing the patient's airway via mask, endotracheal tube, or laryngeal mask airway
- Interpreting and recording the patient's physiological and pharmacological status
- Providing continuity of care into and during the post-operative period
- Perform and maintain regional anesthesia
- Respond to life-threatening situations with the cardiopulmonary resuscitation team

Their educational background and training make CAAs uniquely proficient in contemporary patient monitoring and interpretation of data in all anesthesia care environments.

Anesthesiologist Assistants – What's the Job Outlook?

Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants (CAAs) are in high demand due to a nationwide shortage of anesthesia care professionals. Employment opportunities include:

- Nearly 100% job placement rate
- Starting salaries average \$160,000 plus benefits, sign-on, overtime, and retirement contribution

The Association of Anesthesiologist Assistant Education Programs ([AAAEP](#)) is a new member of the NAAHP Advisory Council.

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- Incredible work-life balance featuring:
 - Flexible 40-hour work week
 - Taking call is often elective
 - 4-6 weeks of paid time off

CAAs currently practice in 17 states. The profession's goal is to achieve the right to practice in all 50 states and U.S. territories.

Anesthesiologist Assistants – A Brief History

In the early 1960s in the U.S., the anesthesiology profession faced a critical challenge. A professional staffing shortage and increasing complexity in anesthesia and surgical patient care required a new perspective.

And so, the AA profession was born from that need for qualified anesthesia professionals. In the 60 years since inception, Anesthesiologist Assistants have become an integral part of the patient's journey in hospitals and healthcare facilities around America. There are currently around 3,000 CAAs in the U.S.

The members of the profession are represented by the national professional society of AAs, the [American Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants](#) (AAAA).

The AAAA is the only national organization dedicated to the ethical advancement of the Anesthesiologist Assistant profession and with the focus on excellence in patient care through education, advocacy, and the promotion of the Anesthesia Care Team.

Additional information about the entire Anesthesiologist Assistant story is available at [professional overview](#).

Anesthesiologist Assistants – Resources for Students and Health Professions Advisors**Anesthesiologist Assistant Programs – Where are they?**

As of July 2021, there are 11 CAAHEP-accredited AA programs, which include:

- Case Western Reserve University (Cleveland, OH; Houston, TX; and, Washington, DC)
- Emory University (Atlanta, GA)
- Indiana University (Indianapolis, IN)
- Medical College of Wisconsin (Milwaukee, WI)
- Nova Southeastern University (Tampa, FL and Fort Lauderdale, FL)
- South University (Savannah, GA)
- University of Colorado (Denver, CO)
- University of Missouri-Kansas City (Kansas City, MO)

And, there are 4 new AA programs seeking CAAHEP-accreditation and launched within the last 18 months, including:

- Nova Southeastern University (Jacksonville, FL and Denver, CO)
- South University (West Palm Beach, FL)
- Northeast Ohio Medical University (Rootstown, OH)

What are AA Applicants Requirements?

Qualified student applicants must possess a baccalaureate degree and complete all the premedical course work required by the typical American medical school/college.

Though minor differences between programs may exist, generalized admission requirements for students seeking entrance into any AA program include:

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with a premedical sciences track
- Two semesters of biology with laboratory
- Two semesters of vertebrate anatomy and physiology (or other advanced biology) with laboratory
- Two semesters of general chemistry; one semester of organic chemistry; a second semester of organic chemistry or biochemistry with laboratory
- Two semesters of general physics with laboratory
- Two semesters of advanced college mathematics including calculus
- Either the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) or the Graduate Records Admission Test (GRE)

Anesthesiologist Assistant Education – Overview

Anesthesiologist Assistant professional education is conducted at programmatically accredited post-graduate programs sponsored by institutionally-accredited colleges and universities. AA program graduates have completed a premedical education, a baccalaureate degree and achieved a master's degree from an Anesthesiologist Assistant program accredited by the national [Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs](#) (CAAHEP).

All Anesthesiologist Assistant education programs must comply with the minimum, national CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines for an Accredited Educational Program for the Anesthesiologist Assistant available at [Standards](#). CAAHEP national education Standards are developed in collaboration with the AA profession's [Accreditation Review Committee for the Anesthesiologist Assistant](#) (ARC-AA).

The primary source for all Anesthesiologist Assistant education programs to maintain abreast of the latest developments in medical education and anesthesia care techniques is through membership in the national [Association of Anesthesiologist](#)

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[Assistant Education Programs*](#) (AAAEP). A link to each member AA program can be accessed on the AAAEP website under the *Members* tab.

AAAEP is the national organization of educational leaders and education programs collaborating to advance and support Anesthesiologist Assistant education and serves as “the Voice of Anesthesiologist Assistant Education”. AAAEP is an Association member of the [NAAHP](#) and a member of the NAAHP’s national Advisory Council.

**Association of Anesthesiologist Assistant Education Programs (AAAEP) is the dba designation of the Association of Anesthesiologist Assistant Program Directors (AAAPD)*

Anesthesiologist Assistant Education Program – Requirements

All anesthesiologist assistant educational programs must be supported by an anesthesiology department of a medical college/university that is accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) or its equivalent. The Anesthesiology department must have the educational resources internally or through educational affiliations that qualify it to meet the criteria of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), or its equivalent, for sponsorship of a physician anesthesiology residency program.

Although national standards recognize the importance of a basic science education within a clinically-oriented academic setting, it is also recognized that some of the supervised clinical practice components of the curriculum may be carried out in affiliated community hospitals that have the appropriate affiliation agreements specifying the requisite teaching faculty and staffing ratios for the students’ clinical experience.

The national standard Anesthesiologist Assistant curriculum is based on an advanced graduate degree, medical model requiring at least two full academic years of study and clinical training. Currently, accredited programs are 24 to 28 months. Graduates of all CAAHEP-accredited Anesthesiologist Assistant educational programs earn a Master’s Degree.

Graduates of CAAHEP-accredited Anesthesiologist Assistant programs are eligible to sit for the national Certified Anesthesiologist Assistant (CAA) board examinations administered by the [National Commission for Certification of Anesthesiologist Assistants](#) (NCCAA).

Anesthesiologist Assistant Certification – What is it?

The program of national certification for the Anesthesiologist Assistant promotes patient safety through professional credentialing assessing the knowledge, skills and competency of the anesthesiologist assistant and promoting lifelong learning through continuing professional education requirements. The

national certification process for anesthesiologist assistants includes an initial certifying examination, ongoing registration of continuing professional medical education, and interval credentialing examinations for continued demonstrations of qualifications and competency.

The NCCAA was founded in July 1989 to develop and administer the certification process for CAAs in the United States. The NCCAA consists of commissioners representing the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) and the American Academy of Anesthesiologists Assistants (AAAA).

Graduates or senior students in the last semester of a CAAHEP-accredited Anesthesiologist Assistant educational program may apply for initial certification. Such a professional distinction is awarded to an Anesthesiologist Assistant who has successfully completed the Certifying Examination for Anesthesiologist Assistants administered by NCCAA.

NCCAA maintains a database of CAAs for verification of individual practitioners. Hospitals, practice groups, state boards and others may verify an individual CAA’s certification via a printed verification statement posted on the *Verify Certification* page at [NCCAA](#).

CASAA – Assisting Applicants and Health Professions Advisors

The [Central Application Service for Anesthesiologist Assistants](#) (CASAA) is a service of the AAAEP providing a uniform and easy-to-use online application for all Master of Science in Anesthesiologist Assistant degree programs available in the U.S.

AAAEP has partnered with Liaison International LLC specifically to provide this common application service for all Anesthesiologist Assistant programs. CASAA is open to any applicant who wishes to apply to *any* CAAHEP-accredited or applicant Anesthesiologist Assistant programs.

Through CASAA, prospective students can select every program to which they wish to apply and then conveniently submit one common application that includes all necessary materials and forms. Prospective applicants should complete the common application and review each individual program’s requirements for admission. Links to individual Anesthesiologist Assistant programs can be found under the *Members* tab at [AAAEP](#).

For the 2021-2022 cycle, health professions advisors and prospective students can review the [CASAA Application Timeline & Requirements](#) for application submission, completion, and verification deadlines including for applicants’ transcripts, test scores and evaluations (recommendations).

Anesthesiologist Assistants *(continued)*

AAAEP has helped develop resources that will assist any health professions advisors and prospective AA students move through the CASAA application process smoothly include:

[CASAA Applicant Help Center](#) - How to Apply

[CASAA Quick Start Guide](#) - Quick Start Guide and FAQs

Additional information for programs and health professions advisors is available at:

Customer Service: [CASAA Customer Services - Liaison](#)

Email: webadmitsupport@liaisonedu.com

Phone: 617-612-2077

For information about AAAEP's member education programs, contact AAAEP at aaeducationprograms@gmail.com

