

Medical assistant practice in states and jurisdictions that do not have a list of delegable medical assisting duties:



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Determining what is (and is not) permissible

I recently received the following query from a medical assistant in Oregon, which does not have a list of delegable medical assisting duties. The medical assistant wrote, "When I reach out to the [Oregon Medical Board, or OMB] they won't give me a list of duties that are and aren't authorized so I am wondering how to find out this information. I do not want to do things I am not supposed to be doing."

In the absence of a list of duties delegable to medical assistants in a given state or jurisdiction (as in Oregon), there are nonetheless resources from national professional associations, accrediting bodies, and other entities that provide sound guidance on medicolegal issues, including the parameters around medical assistant practice.

For example, specific to Oregon, the OMB adopted in 2012 (and amended in 2022) a statement of philosophy, "[Use of Unlicensed Healthcare Personnel](#)," that reflects the board's guidance to medical, osteopathic, and podiatric physicians and physician associates on this matter. An excerpt from this document, for example, elucidates the

principle of adequate and appropriate supervision of unlicensed health care personnel by licensed physicians

Overarching legal principles that are applicable in all U.S. jurisdictions

Over the many years of answering queries of this type, I have developed a document that outlines those tasks that can be delegated to, and performed by, medical assistants. This resource contains legal principles generally applicable in all United States' jurisdictions, including Oregon. Note the following excerpts (from section 7):

- It is not permissible for medical assistants to perform tasks that constitute the practice of medicine, or require the skill and knowledge of physicians or other licensed providers;
- It is not permissible for medical assistants to perform tasks that are restricted in state law to other health professionals—often licensed health professionals;
- It is not permissible for medical assistants to perform tasks that *require the exercise of independent clinical judgment, and/or the making of clinical assessments, evaluations, or interpretations*;

In addition, section 10 of the document provides guidance on formulating a legal opinion on whether a particular task is delegable to medical assistants when state law does not address the legality or when state law is ambiguous:

The Core Curriculum is found in Appendix B of the [Standards and Guidelines](#). (Questions about this article may be directed to the author at dbalasa@aama-ntl.org.)