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Medication Assistant, Certified – What is a MAC?



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What is a MAC?

A new and innovative option for Alabama's Senior Living facilities. This concept is not "new" to other states, but Alabama has stepped up and moved forward to bring this opportunity to the Senior Living facilities, allowing facilities to grow their staff and invest in the future of providing exceptional resident care, as well as their people.

MAC is the acronym for Medication Assistant, Certified for limited medication assistance to residents of long-term care facilities and hospitals. The Alabama Board of Nursing provides the Administrative Code, [ABN Administrative Code §610-X-6-.01\(6\)](#)

The Code states licensed nurses may delegate limited medication administration to certain individuals who have completed the approved program of study administered by the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) and have achieved the MAC designation by passing the MACE examination administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN).

Delegation is defined as the act of authorizing a competent individual to perform selected nursing activities supportive to registered nurses or licensed practical nurses in selected situations, while retaining accountability for the outcome, if delegation is to an unlicensed individual - such as a MAC.

When delegating, the nurse must consider:

- The Medication Assistant, Certified MAC's demonstrated competency
- The health status of each patient.
- The nurse's assessment is key to all delegation and the nurse, following established standards of practice, rules, and facility policies; assessment **must** occur prior to, during, and following performance of the delegated nursing practice.
- The established standards of practice, rules, and facility policies

Limitations for MAC workers:

1. No access or administration of narcotics and controlled substances.
2. No injectable medications, with the exception of premeasured auto injectable medications for anaphylaxis, vaccines, and opioid-related drug overdose.
3. The MAC cannot perform calculation of medication dosages, other than measuring a prescribed amount of liquid medication or breaking a scored tablet.
4. The MAC cannot receive verbal or telephone orders from a licensed prescriber
5. The MAC worker can only give PRN medication such as Tylenol, Aspirin, Motrin, etc. (nonnarcotic and non-controlled) at the direction of the nurse.

→ MAC medication administration is limited to include eye, ear, nose, oral, topical, inhalant, rectal, or vaginal routes.

Emergency Rule* effective on January 22, 2021. This emergency rule expanded the delegation program for medication assistants, allowing the administration of pre-measured vaccine injections and PRN medications - provided that the PRN medications are directed by a licensed nurse.

*The permanent rule change is pending, and is scheduled to take effect on April 12, 2021.

Potential Risk Exposures:

- Medication Errors
- Performing Duties outside the Scope of Practice
- Diversion/Theft

Prudent Risk Management practices:

Does your facility have the following?

- ✓ Policies and procedures that define the role and duties of your MACs/ Delegating Nurses
- ✓ Job Descriptions
- ✓ Competency Processes
- ✓ QAPI involvement for the MAC program and actions
- ✓ Medication Error protocols
- ✓ Routine Staff Communication
- ✓ Determination of nurse/MAC ratio
- ✓ Education and training for the “delegating” nurse/Staff
- ✓ Education and training of all Staff
- ✓ Ongoing training
- ✓ Communication and chain of command for the MAC
- ✓ Communication processes for your Residents/Resident Representatives
- ✓ Facility specific policies- allowed medication administration

Also...

Oversite and Monitoring of the delegation program - Develop and implement strong policies and procedures which include any specific staff members responsible for managing the program. Monitor that those individuals have been properly trained on the program and their role.

Competency Process- The rule states that an initial and annual competency validation evaluation be completed. Completing additional training and competency evaluations if a concern arises or if you determine that you feel additional training is warranted would be prudent risk management practice.

QAPI involvement - Identify and implement a quality improvement plan for medication errors- ensure that all staff have been trained on this plan and all MAC's have been trained on the specific protocols to follow in the event of a medication error.

Team Huddles/Meetings - Develop a standardized way for interdisciplinary teams to communicate and collaborate. This will result in situational awareness, staff support, and pro-active risk identification – a key component for success.

Communication Plan – Establishing a communication plan for your residents, resident representatives and families-reaching out to all prior to implementing the program in your facility may help mitigate potential issues that can arise in the future. Include in your residents, resident representatives and families education communication- the definition of a “MAC” and what their role and limitations will be in the facility, especially if there are additional facility specific restrictions for the delegation program. This will provide an opportunity to answer any questions and proactively address any concerns.

Nurse/MAC ratio – Currently there is no specific regulation at this time to address the nurse/MAC ratio. Seek specific guidance from a representative with the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) may be helpful.

Training includes:

60 hours of classroom training and 40 hours of clinical training for a total of 100 hours. Successful completion of the course qualifies candidates to take the Medication Assistant Certification Exam.

Program Costs:

Costs vary by college, local community colleges that participate in this program can provide more information.

Requirements:

Students who want to begin this line of work will need a satisfactory criminal/consumer background check and drug screen and be at least 17 years of age by the program’s completion.

A facility can choose to add the requirement that the MAC candidate be a certified nursing assistant prior to pursuing the MAC certification. While being a certified nursing assistant is not a requirement, it is a prudent risk management practice.

Testing:

The Medication Aide Certification Examination (MACE) is a national medication aide certification examination administered to candidates who choose to receive additional training to become certified medication assistants.

As a public service, the ABN serves as the agent for processing applications for approval to sit for the MACE exam in Alabama. Once certified, these medication aides serve an important role in hospitals and long-term care facilities by helping distribute medications and monitoring for adverse reactions.

The Alabama Board of Nursing has contracted with Pearson VUE®, a nationally recognized leading provider of assessment services to regulatory agencies and national associations, to administer the examination. Pearson VUE along with the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) will develop, score, and report the results of the Medication Assistant Examination to the Alabama Board of Nursing.

Have a few questions?

For more information, you may contact the Alabama Board of Nursing 1-800-656-5318 and speak with Sammi Smith, Manager of the MAC program. You can also email her at MAC@abn.alabama.gov.

Sources:

- Alabama Board of Nursing Website [Medication Assistant, Certified \(MAC\) | Alabama Board of Nursing](#)
- ACCS [Medication Aide - Alabama Community College System \(accs.edu\)](#)
- ANHA – Alabama Nursing Home Association

About the Author

Kerri Locker is a Loss Control Specialist for the Senior Living Risk Partners Division of Gallagher Risk Management Services. Kerri has worked as a nurse for over 20 years in various areas of the Healthcare Industry: including, Senior Living, Hospitals, Home Health and Hospice. She has held various positions including Assisted Living Administrator, Medicare Case Manager, Marketing Director, Home Health and Hospice Specialist, and Direct Patient Care Nurse-Nephrology and Short Term Care. Kerri is Certified as a Resident Assessment Coordinator, and Risk Manager Certified. Kerri is licensed in Tennessee as a Residential Home for the Aged Administrator/Assisted Care Living Facility Administrator and in 2017, she received her certification as a Certified Dementia Practitioner from the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners; in 2020 Kerri completed her Nursing Home Infection Control Preventionist Training Courses from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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