

CERTIFIED MEDICATION ASSISTANTS IN IDAHO

The Medication Assistant-Certified (MA-C) training and certification was established in rule by the Idaho Board of Nursing in 2008. Lewis Clark State College offered the training the following year and four certified nursing assistants (CNAs) in Lewiston were certified. The recession that followed substantially reduced the nursing shortage and the need for MA-Cs.

Idaho's zero-based-budgeting policy forced the board of nursing to eliminate the MA-C rule in 2019 because no one had been certified by the board of nursing in nearly a decade. As the nursing shortage intensified, legislation was passed in 2020 to bring this certificate back to the board of nursing. The current statute requires that the training be offered by an institution accredited by the United States Department of Education. In Idaho, that means a university or community college. No community college in Idaho has offered this training since 2009 and the need for nurses and MA-Cs is greater than ever!

Both facilities and colleges sometimes confuse this course with the Assistance with Medications (AWM) course that every Idaho college offers to hundreds of caregivers in home and community-based settings, such as assisted living. That training allows the caregiver to "assist" with medications as delegated by a licensed nurse. Both federal and state rules allow MA-Cs to "administer" medications as delegated by a licensed nurse in skilled nursing facilities.

The nursing and CNA shortage has intensified dramatically since the pandemic began with no signs of resolution. The Idaho Health Care Association introduced legislation this session to allow facilities and others to offer the MA-C training. Skilled nursing facilities will only offer this training to their best CNAs – which will provide a career ladder for them. MA-Cs only administer routine medications. This allows licensed nurses to use their knowledge and skills to address the many other challenges that require their critical thinking abilities.