

CNAs vs. CMAs: An In-Depth Comparison

We'll explore and compare two crucial players in the healthcare delivery system: the certified nurse assistant (CNA) vs. the certified medication aide (CMA).

BOUNTIFUL, UTAH, UNITED STATES, July 12, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The healthcare industry is like a complex machine with many interlinking and collaborating parts. Like any functioning machine, each part has a purpose, and while some may have more responsibilities than others, each piece is vital to the process.

In this article, we'll explore and compare two crucial players in the healthcare delivery system: the certified nurse assistant (CNA) vs. the certified medication aide (CMA).

What Does CNA Stand For?

The acronym CNA stands for certified nursing assistant, although some states use the title certified nurse aide. It's worth noting that a few states (notably Arizona and Vermont) use the title licensed nursing assistant; therefore, the acronym in those cases is LNA.

What Does CMA Stand For?

CMA generally stands for certified medication aide. However, as with CNAs, it's important to note that the name (and therefore the acronym) for CMAs is not uniform nationwide. The CMA acronym can also mean certified medical assistant or certified medication assistant.

In some states, this role may be identified as medication aide-certified (MA-C), certified residential medication aide (CRMA), certified medication technician (CMT or MedTech), qualified medication administration personnel (QMAP), or other variations. Also, not all states have this type of healthcare support role.



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What Is a CNA?

A CNA is a healthcare worker responsible for providing direct supportive care to patients in a clinical setting. The responsibilities of CNAs place them in prolonged direct contact with their patients, and thus, they often have opportunities to build important rapport with patients and their loved ones.

The types of supportive care that CNAs provide patients include assistance with activities of daily living, routine measurements of vital signs, cleaning, basic wound care, and relaying patient concerns to the nurses in charge of care plans. Registered nurses (RNs) or licensed practical nurses (LPNs)/licensed vocational nurses (LVN) can supervise CNAs.

What Are Activities of Daily Living?

As mentioned above, CNAs are primarily responsible for assisting their patients with activities of daily living (ADLs). Unless one has experience working in a long-term care facility or have already completed CNA training, One will probably wondering what ADLs are. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services defines activities of daily living as "...activities related to personal care." As such, one can expect routine ADL responsibilities as a CNA to include the following:

- Assistance with bathing
- Assistance with toileting
- Assistance with personal hygiene (i.e., combing hair, brushing teeth, trimming nails)
- Assistance with getting dressed
- Assistance with eating
- Assistance with walking
- Assistance with transferring from the bed to a chair

For a more in-depth look at CNAs and how much they earn, check out our article, [“What Does a CNA Do & How Much Do They Earn?”](#)

What Is a CMA?

A CMA is a healthcare support worker responsible for administering medications to patients—intravenous and injection-type medications excluded—or assisting patients in administering medications themselves. Depending on the setting, CMAs may also assist with ADLs. Under the supervision of RNs, CMA responsibilities typically include the following:

- Confirming the identity of the patient before administering any medications
- Providing patient education about their prescribed medications
- Documenting the administration of medications, including the times and dosages
- Observing and reporting any patient reaction to the medication
- Restocking the medication dispensary

What Characteristics Make a Good CMA?

Successful medication aides rely on their training, skills, and experience. Here are some of the characteristics and skills that one will need to develop to thrive in this role:

Attention to detail: Ensuring that one has the correct patient for the correct medication, dosage, and time aren't the only details requiring attention. As a CMA, one must also accurately document ones actions and observe their patient for any changes or reactions.

Organization skills: Ones responsibilities are specific and detailed, and one must document their actions accurately. Medication carts are routinely audited.

Understanding of technology: One must be able to use the facility's software to carry out their tasks.

Effective communication: Part of this role is building rapport with ones patients and determining how much assistance they need with medication administration. Additionally, one must report any observations they have about their patients to the appropriate nurse, and often, one must communicate with the nurse manager or pharmacist when medication supplies are low.

CMA vs. CNA: What's the Difference?

The key difference between the two roles is the additional training and subsequent increased responsibility of certified medication aides. CNAs are not authorized to take on any medication responsibilities. The CNA's role remains restricted to providing assistive and supportive care to residents and patients.

However, these two roles have a close relationship; they both play fundamental support roles to their patients and the supervising nurses, and a CMA's training and education build upon that of a CNA.

Difference in Pay

As one might expect, the pay for a CMA vs. a CNA differs. CMAs generally earn higher hourly pay rates than CNAs, which makes sense because they have additional training, and medication administration is a strictly regulated responsibility.

The average CNA salary for traditional employment is around \$16 hourly.

The average CMA salary for traditional employment is around \$18 hourly.

It's worth noting that the above figures are for traditional employment jobs, either full-time or part-time. Hourly pay rates for CMA and CNA per diem or PRN shifts with Nursa are usually much higher.

CMA vs. CNA: Which Should One Choose?

Either profession has a level of stability and job security that many other occupations envy because of the high demand and variety of opportunities. What are some reasons for deciding on a CNA or CMA career?

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Sources:

[Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Appendix](#)

[Vermont Secretary of State: Nursing Applications & Renewals](#)

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