

- Certified anesthesiologist assistants (CAAs) work under the direction of an anesthesiologist (a physician – either a MD or DO) to design and operate anesthesia care plans.
- They operate anesthesia equipment; monitor patients before, during, and after anesthesia; and assist in life saving measures such as CPR and life support.
- Responsibilities include taking patient histories; performing physical exams; administering necessary lab tests; preparing the patient to be monitored as directed by the physician; assisting with preparatory procedures; inserting venous, arterial, and other invasive catheters; testing anesthesia equipment; maintaining anesthesia levels; airway management including intubation; working with intensive care units and pain clinics; and preparing case summaries.
- CAAs work exclusively within the field of anesthesia and typically work in hospitals or surgical centers.
- Although unfamiliar to many people, anesthesiologist assistant programs began in 1969.

Education & Licensure

- Complete a bachelor’s degree in any major that excites your curiosity.
- A two-year master’s level anesthesiologist assistant program is required (programs typically are 24-28 months).
- Programs should be accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Allied Health Educational Programs (CAAHEP).
- The program should also work closely with a medical school and have some instructors who are board-certified physicians in anesthesiology.
- During the clinical portion of training (over 2000 hours), students typically administer as many as 600 different anesthetics during a variety of surgeries.
- Pass a certification exam administered by the National Commission for the Certification of Anesthesiology Assistants (NCCAA).

Preparation

- Shadow a CAA and/or an anesthesiologist to make sure this is the right field for you and you truly understand what an anesthesiologist assistant does.
- Take an aptitude test. Some programs accept the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) while others require the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT).
- Research where CAAs are currently licensed to practice as this may limit where you can live.
- Programs do not have a standard set of requirements, but many similarities in their requirements do exist.
- The initial courses are similar to other professional health care fields such as MD and DO programs, but some further courses are required.
- Grades of B- or higher are generally required in these prerequisite courses.
- Most schools require the classes listed below.

Common Prerequisite Courses (required courses determined by each program but similar to this list)

Requirements	Course	Purdue Equivalents (specific courses may vary by major)
Biology	Intro Biology with lab	BIOL 11000-11100 or BIOL 13100 & BIOL 23100 & 23200 (lab) or BIOL 23000 & upper level biology (including 2 hours of lab)
	Anatomy & Physiology with lab	BIOL 20300-20400 (BIOL 30100-30200)
Chemistry	General with lab	CHM 11500-11600 or CHM 12901 (some schools will also require CHM 11500 credit exam) or CHM 12500-12600 or CHM 12300-12400 or CHM 13600
	Organic with lab	CHM 25500-25600 or CHM 26100-26200 or CHM 26505-26605 or MCMP 20400-20500
	Biochemistry	BCHM 30700 or BCHM 56100 or CHM 33900 or CHM 43300 or MCMP 20800 or (CHM 33300, CHM 53300)
Physics	General with lab	PHYS 22000-22100 or PHYS 23300-23400 or PHYS 17200-27200 or PHYS 17200 & 24100 & PHYS 25200 (lab) or ENGR 16100-16200*
English	Composition	ENGL 10600 or ENGL 10800 or SCLA 10100*
Math	Calculus & Statistics	Calculus: MA 22300 or MA 16100 or MA 16500 or equivalent Statistics: STAT 30100 or STAT 50300 or equivalent
Additional	Other Recommended Courses	Medical Terminology, Cell Biology, Microbiology
Optional	Pre-Med Planning Seminar	BIOL 39600-0 credit 10 week class covering how to apply to health professions programs

*Ask individual Anesthesiologist Assistant programs if they will accept these courses toward their requirements. ~~Courses~~ no longer offered.

Student Organizations: American Medical Student Association, Caduceus Club

Program Information

- [American Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants](https://www.anesthetist.org/become-a-caa) <https://www.anesthetist.org/become-a-caa>

Applying

- There are 13 accredited programs.
- Application for programs is made through the [Central Application Service for Anesthesiologist Assistant Programs](https://casaa.liasoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login) (CASAA) though you may also need to fill out online materials through individual schools' graduate programs. <https://casaa.liasoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>
- Each program has varying application requirements.
- Early application is essential as there are only a few programs with relatively small classes. CASAA opens in mid-March. Ideally your application should be submitted by early May.

Fee Assistance

- CASAA does not offer fee assistance or waivers.
- [GRE Fee Reduction Program](https://www.ets.org/gre/revise/general/about/fees/reductions/) <https://www.ets.org/gre/revise/general/about/fees/reductions/>
- [MCAT Fee Assistance through the AAMC](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/fee-assistance-program/) <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/applying-medical-school-process/fee-assistance-program/>

Employment Outlook

- Anesthesiologist Assistants are in high demand because of rising health care costs. ([Explore Health Careers](https://explorehealthcareers.org/career/allied-health-professions/anesthesiologist-assistant/) <https://explorehealthcareers.org/career/allied-health-professions/anesthesiologist-assistant/>)
- Salaries typically start at \$110,000-120,000.
- Most students leave programs with multiple job offers before graduation and are often offered generous signing bonuses.
- CAAs are not licensed to practice in all states so this may be a consideration depending on where you are hoping to live. The federal government recognizes and uses CAAs. Both the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs authorize the use of CAAs to practice under the TRICARE insurance program.
- Currently CAAs can practice in Veterans facilities and Defense facilities nationally and in 17 states either under their own licensure or under the delegatory authority of a physician (much as physician assistants practice). [This map](https://aaaa.memberclicks.net/assets/aaaa%20work%20states%20%20pdf%20map%20january%202015%20hi%20rez.pdf) indicates the practice distribution of CAAs: <https://aaaa.memberclicks.net/assets/aaaa%20work%20states%20%20pdf%20map%20january%202015%20hi%20rez.pdf>

Diversity Matters

The anesthesiologist assistant profession needs professionals who look just like you, and who share your life experiences. Race or ethnicity, LGBTQ+ identity, disability, age, geographic region, socioeconomic status, social and cultural identity, and nationality all add to a richer experience for all students in the anesthesiologist assistant classroom, contribute to the anesthesiologist assistant profession, and ultimately lead to better outcomes for patients.

Programs in the Region

- [Indiana University](https://medicine.iu.edu/departments/anesthesia/education-programs/ms/) Indianapolis, IN <https://medicine.iu.edu/departments/anesthesia/education-programs/ms/>
- [Case Western Reserve University](https://case.edu/medicine/msa-program/) Cleveland, OH <https://case.edu/medicine/msa-program/>
- [Medical College of Wisconsin](http://www.mcw.edu/Medical-School/Home/Master-of-Science-in-Anesthesia-Program.htm) Milwaukee, WI <http://www.mcw.edu/Medical-School/Home/Master-of-Science-in-Anesthesia-Program.htm>
- [University of Missouri-Kansas City](http://med.umkc.edu/MSA/) Kansas City, MO <http://med.umkc.edu/MSA/>

More Information

- [CASAA](https://casaa.liasoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login) (Application Service) <https://casaa.liasoncas.com/applicant-ux/#/login>
- [American Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants](https://www.anesthetist.org/) (AAAA) <https://www.anesthetist.org/>
- [American Society of Anesthesiologists](https://www.asahq.org/) <https://www.asahq.org/>

Other Careers to Consider

Nurse Anesthetist · Physician (MD or DO) · Pharmacist · Dentist

Preparing for your Giant Leap

purdue.edu/preprofessional