

FACT SHEET: SB 352

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MEDICAL ASSISTANTS: SUPERVISION

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THE PROBLEM

Under current laws, a physician must be present in the practice site to supervise a Medical Assistant (MA) in most settings. However, MAs can work under the supervision of a Physician Assistant (PA), Nurse Practitioner (NP) or Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM), in licensed community and free clinics. With the exception of these clinics, MAs are limited to performing administrative and clerical duties and therefore may not perform or assist with even the simplest technical supportive services if the physician is not on the premises.

BACKGROUND

According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, there are nearly 82,000 MAs employed in California. MAs are personnel trained to perform basic administrative, clerical and technical supportive services in a medical office or clinic setting. These services include taking blood pressure, charting height and weight, administering medication, performing skin tests and withdrawing blood by venipuncture.

In 2001, SB 111 (Alpert) amended the Medical Practice Act to authorize MAs to function in licensed free and community clinics under the supervision of a PA, NP or CNM, without the supervising physician present. However, SB 111 failed to address the need for these

practitioners to supervise MAs in other outpatient setting such as physician' offices.

THE SOLUTION

SB 352 (Pavley) will allow medical assistants to work in all outpatient clinics under the supervision of a physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or nurse-midwife without a physician on the premises. This will reduce congestion in outpatient facilities, save money and resources, and result in more time-efficient appointments for patients as well as a more efficient distribution of tasks for medical professionals.

Support

- California Academy of Physician Assistants (sponsor)
- California Association of Physician Groups (co-sponsor)
- California Association of Nurse Practitioners
- California Optometric Association
- The United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals (UNAC/UHCP)
- California Academy of Family Physicians
- Kaiser Permanente