

F. Program Need Justification

1. Will the program satisfy a clearly documented need (institutional, societal, and employability) in an effective and efficient manner?

a. Institutional - There is a clear institutional need for additional health care programs at Chattahoochee Valley Community College. As we experience increasing numbers of applicants for our two nursing programs, limited seating and clinical space has forced us to deny admission to larger numbers of deserving applicants who want to pursue a health sciences career. The Medical Assisting Program will offer these individuals a chance to secure employment in an alternative field that, like the local area, is growing significantly and in great demand.

b. Societal - According to numerous sources of employment data, which include the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Alabama Office of Industrial Relations, and local surveys, there is an urgent need for medical assistants at the local, state, and national level. According to the BLS, medical assisting will be one of the fastest growing occupational specialties through 2012. The Alabama Department of Industrial Relations reported on its website that medical assistants are the ninth fastest-growing occupation in the state; by the year 2014, it is anticipated that the need for this credential will increase by 50.39% percent. Moreover, Chattahoochee Valley Community College, along with Columbus and Fort Benning, Georgia, is planning for a large influx of population over the next several years, due to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) initiative. More than 16, 000 new jobs will be created, and local healthcare providers will be increasingly challenged to accommodate the needs of the larger population. The local availability of a Medical Assisting Program will significantly assist in meeting those increased needs in an effective and efficient manner.

c. Employability- Approximately three hundred surveys were recently distributed in the local area, as part of a comprehensive needs assessment. The results, which represent a variety of employers such as hospitals, long-term care facilities, and physician offices, demonstrate overwhelming support for a new Medical Assisting Program at CVCC. The survey instrument and a summary of the responses can be seen in Appendix B.

2. If the program duplicates or closely resembles another program already offered in the state, can this duplication be justified?

There are five other colleges within the Alabama Community College System that offer a Medical Assisting Program, and the closest of those institutions is 90-100 miles away. Therefore, those programs do not and cannot meet the needs of the students served by CVCC, and the proposed program is not duplicative.

3. What characteristics of the identified need require that it be met by a new program rather than an existing program?

There is an identified demand for medical assistants in the CVCC service area. No similar programs are offered by institutions in the Alabama Community College System in this area of the state. A new alternative is needed by students at the college who are seeking employment in the healthcare industry, and area employers have a great need of medical assistants, which will continue to increase as the area's population grows substantially in the coming years. With the convergence of these internal and external forces, the need for this program is particularly acute. Input from area employers and Medical Assisting Program Directors at other community colleges in Alabama indicate a strong demand for an AAS degree with related short-term certificates. The presence of a degree program is expected to facilitate articulation opportunities with local baccalaureate institutions.

4. Based on your research on the employment market for graduates of this program, indicate the total projected job openings (including both growth and replacement demands) in your State Board of Education approved service area as well as the state at large.

In the immediate service area alone, it is expected that there will be more than one hundred job openings within the next year. This is based upon survey data results, as well as discussions on hiring trends with the largest health care employer in the area- Columbus Regional Healthcare.

Projected Job Openings

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
College Service Area*	100	120	135	140	145	640
State**	260	270	281	292	304	1407 (new)

*based upon local survey data

**based upon Alabama Office of Industrial Relations data

5. Give a brief description of the methodology used to determine the projected job openings.

There are numerous sources from which data have been gathered. First, a survey instrument was developed and disseminated to approximately 300 healthcare employers in the service area. The majority of those surveys were sent to physician offices because physicians are the primary employer of medical assistants. However, other entities were covered in the survey population as well,

including ambulatory clinics, local hospitals, and long-term care facilities. Secondly, data were retrieved from the Bureau of Labor Statistics which clearly documents that medical assisting will be among the fastest growing occupations through 2012. Third, discussions occurred with Mr. Jim Henry at the Alabama Industrial Relations office, during which time Mr. Henry outlined state trends and growth data for medical assistants in the state of Alabama. According to the Alabama Office of Industrial Relations, the average annual number of new job openings for medical assistants is approximately 260. Finally, discussions have taken place with members of the health care community to determine hiring trends and future needs. Those community members overwhelmingly support the implementation of a new program at Chattahoochee Valley Community College.

6. If the program is primarily intended to meet needs other than employment needs, present a brief rationale.

The implementation of this program is for the purpose of meeting the health care needs of the community and the demand of those students seeking careers in health care.

7. If similar programs are available at other institutions in the state, will any type of program collaboration be utilized? Why or why not? What specific efforts have been made to collaborate with institutions to meet the need for this program? Address qualitative, cost, and access considerations of any collaborations that were considered.

As noted above, the nearest institution in the Alabama Community College System with a program in Medical Assisting is approximately 90-100 miles from Phenix City. Therefore, the sharing of classrooms, labs, and clinical sites will not be an option. However, contact with other institutions has been initiated in preparing this proposal, and the college will pursue future collaboration with other ACCS institutions in terms of faculty expertise, course and program materials, and addressing needs and challenges that are common to all Medical Assisting Programs across the state.

8. Will any type of distance education technology be utilized in the delivery of the program on your campus or to remote sites? If not, why?

Delivery strategies will primarily include the conventional classroom methods of lecture and discussion. Students will be very much engaged in laboratory experiences including skills demonstrations and simulations. While distance learning will not be utilized initially, the college will explore opportunities to utilize instructional technology, including distance learning, in the delivery of course content. The use of distance learning could open up avenues of further collaboration with other ACCS institutions.

9. Address the quality, access and cost considerations of using distance

technology in the program.

Should distance technology be used, quality, access, and cost should not pose significant obstacles for the institution or for program students. The college has the necessary resources in place to ensure a quality distance education experience, and no further expenditures in this area are anticipated as a result of program implementation. Even if online coursework is not available, faculty and students in the program will be communicating frequently via the computer, and it is anticipated that course materials and assignments will be available through Blackboard, our course management system, which is used by instructors across the campus.

G. Program Resource Requirements

1. Number of currently employed faculty who teach in the program:

Primary Faculty / Full-time _____ Part-time _____
Support Faculty / Full-time _____ Part-time _____

Full and part-time faculty employed in the health sciences, office technology, workplace skills, and general education fields will teach courses in the medical assisting curriculum. These individuals, who meet all qualifications stated in Postsecondary Faculty Credentials, will be identified prior to the implementation of the new program.

2. Number of additional faculty who will be employed to teach in the program during the first five years:

Primary Faculty / Full-time 1 Part-time 1
Support Faculty / Full-time _____ Part-time _____

One new full-time faculty member will be hired to direct and teach in the program. In accordance with CAAHEP standards, this individual will have a minimum of an associate degree, be credentialed in medical assisting by a national organization, and have sufficient experience in an ambulatory health care setting. It is anticipated that a part-time faculty member will be hired during the five-year period to support classroom, laboratory, and/or clinical needs.

3. If the qualifications of new faculty to be hired differ from requirements stated in Postsecondary Faculty Credentials, indicate such.

Faculty hired will meet the requirements set forth by the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education stated in Faculty Credentials.

4. Briefly describe available and additional support staff that will be provided for the program.