



Standard Roles and Responsibilities for Anesthesia Assistants

Guiding Principles

- The practice of anesthesia in Canada follows the Canadian Anesthesiologists' Society (CAS) *Guidelines to the Practice of Anesthesia* (the "Guidelines"). The Guidelines are a comprehensive, evidence-based framework of best practices in the specialized medical field of anesthesia. The recommended roles and responsibilities of Anesthesia Assistants are detailed throughout the Guidelines and the appended *Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants*.
- Anesthesia assistants are physician extenders who practice under the supervision of a physician anesthesiologist.
- The Anesthesia Assistant designation is given to individuals who have graduated from accredited anesthesia assistant programs that adhere to the National Competency Framework for Anesthesia Assistance (NCF AA). Individuals who have not completed didactic and clinical training through accredited programs should not be given the designation of Anesthesia Assistant.
- In accordance with the CAS Guidelines, the site-specific scope of practice of Anesthesia Assistants must be:
 - Within the scope of practice of the supervising anesthesiologist,
 - Approved by both the anesthesia department and the appropriate administrative bodies, and
 - Covered by the facility's liability insurance.

Purpose

The following document outlines the standard roles and responsibilities of Anesthesia Assistants in British Columbia, as established by the CAS Guidelines and the NCF AA.

Roles and Responsibilities

Clinical Duties

General Duties

The Anesthesia Assistant shall:

1. Assist with all aspects of the anesthetic care plan formulated for a particular patient. Including preoperative optimization, induction, and maintenance of the anesthetic. Assist with the alteration of anesthetic levels, administration of adjunctive treatments, emergence and continuity of care into and during the postoperative period.

CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants

2. Whenever possible, be available at all times and places where anesthetic services are provided.

CAS (2023, section 2.5) Guidelines to the Practice of Anesthesia

3. When delegated care of a patient during all general and major regional anesthetics, remain with the patient at all times until care is resumed by the responsible anesthesiologist.

CAS (2023, section 5.3) Guidelines to the Practice of Anesthesia

4. When delegated care of a patient for procedural sedation, remain with the patient at all times until the patient is transferred to the care of personnel in an appropriate care unit.

CAS (2023, section 5.3) Guidelines to the Practice of Anesthesia

Perioperative Duties

The Anesthesia Assistant shall:

1. Assist in the preparation of the patient for surgery and perform pre-operative assessments as requested by the responsible anesthesiologist.

CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants

2. Assist with or perform the insertion of devices such as oro or nasogastric tubes, intravenous catheters, and intra-arterial catheters.

CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants

3. Prepare prescribed pharmacological agents under the direction of the responsible anesthesiologist.

CSRT (2016, p.9) National Competency Framework in Anesthesia Assistance

4. Provide diagnostic data for the anesthesiologist by performing duties such as blood sampling, pulmonary functioning testing, end-tidal carbon dioxide monitoring, pulse oximetry, and transcutaneous monitoring.

CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants

5. Interpret the results of performed diagnostic tests and propose corrective actions in consultation with the responsible anesthesiologist.

CSRT (2016, p.24) National Competency Framework in Anesthesia Assistance

6. Assist with regional anesthesia procedures including the performance of ultrasonography for nerve blocks.

CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants

7. Assist with or perform administration of massive transfusion of blood products per hospital protocols.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
8. Assist the anesthesiologist with cases in locations out of the operating room.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
9. Respond to cardiac arrests in OR, PACU or other locations according to hospital procedures and policies.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
10. Perform initial resuscitation in life-threatening situations according to established protocols (i.e. Basic Cardiac Life Support/Advanced Cardiac Life Support, Malignant Hyperthermia, Neonatal Resuscitation Program, and Pediatric Advanced Life Support), while awaiting the arrival of the responsible Anesthesiologist.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants

Intraoperative Duties

The Anesthesia Assistant shall:

1. Assist with or perform airway management, including insertion of laryngeal masks, tracheal intubation, and mask ventilation.
CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
2. Prepare fiber-optic bronchoscopes and other equipment as required, and assist the anesthesiologist during bronchoscopy with equipment set-up, preparation of and instillation of medication, and sample procurement.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
3. Assist the anesthesiologist with difficult intubations.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
4. Assist with the insertion of pulmonary artery catheters and central venous catheters.
CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
5. Assist with the performance of transesophageal echocardiography, transthoracic echocardiography, or other ultrasonography.
CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
6. Assist in the positioning of the patient.
CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
7. Adjust therapies (e.g., ventilation, temperature control devices, etc.).
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
8. Prepare and/or administer prescribed pharmacological agents to the patient and observe for side effects and efficacy of treatment under the direction of the responsible anesthesiologist.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
9. Assess the patient's pharmacological requirements and titrate prescribed pharmacological agents as needed in consultation with the responsible anesthesiologist.
CSRT (2016, p.9) National Competency Framework in Anesthesia Assistance

10. Assess the patient's physiological status during anesthesia by performing duties such as monitoring vital signs and anesthetic gases and advising the anesthesiologist of the patient's status.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
11. Assist at emergence from anesthesia by performing duties such as aspirating secretions from the trachea and pharynx, removing laryngeal mask airways, and tracheal extubation of the patient. Remove monitoring equipment after surgery.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
12. Evaluate and monitor patients and administer medication for procedural sedation as defined in the CAS Guidelines.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants

Postoperative Duties

The Anesthesia Assistant shall:

1. Assist with the transfer of ventilated and/or anesthetized patients between areas of the hospital as required.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
2. Transfer post-operative patients to the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) under the direction of the responsible anesthesiologist.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
3. Formulate a postoperative pain management plan and administer prescribed pharmacological agents in accordance with the care plan in consultation with the responsible anesthesiologist.
CSRT (2016, p.39) National Competency Framework in Anesthesia Assistance
4. Monitor patient progress in the PACU, update anesthesia monitoring records, and report patient status to the responsible anesthesiologist, in collaboration with the PACU staff, as requested.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
5. Recognize the side effects associated with pharmacological and neuraxial analgesia, and perform corrective actions as necessary in consultation with the responsible anesthesiologist.
CSRT (2016, p.39) National Competency Framework in Anesthesia Assistance

Technical Duties

The Anesthesia Assistant shall:

1. Set up, test, calibrate and operate physiologic monitors such as anesthesia workstations, intubation/airway devices, fiberoptic endoscopes, physiologic monitors and infusion devices.
 - 1.1. To ensure the safety of equipment, perform equipment checks as indicated and maintain records of problems.
 - 1.2. Replace and change anesthetic equipment supplies as per the routine maintenance schedule.
 - 1.3. Maintain the stock of drug supplies and equipment at anesthesia workstations.*CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants*

2. Troubleshoot anesthetic equipment.
 - 2.1. Correct problems discovered, and/or follow up with Biomedical engineering technicians or service representatives.
CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
3. Monitor trace gas pollution levels.
CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
4. Maintain and stock pediatric, difficult intubation, hemodynamic and malignant hyperthermia carts.
CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
5. Participate in the operating room infection control program by performing duties such as maintaining cleanliness in anesthetic equipment in accordance with quality assurance programs.
CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
6. Maintain measures, according to established procedures, to minimize operating room pollution.
CAS (2018, p.4) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants

Administrative Duties

The Anesthesia Assistant shall:

1. In conjunction with the Anesthesiology and Biomedical Engineering Departments, participate in equipment preventative maintenance as per manufacturer and Canadian Standards Association specifications to ensure equipment is operating in a safe and effective manner.
CSRT (2016, p.8) National Competency Framework for Anesthesia Assistance
2. Participate in health technology assessment, including (where appropriate) meeting with medical device and pharmaceutical sales representatives to organize trials and evaluations of new equipment and drugs according to hospital protocol. Gather and collate feedback and participate in purchase decisions.
CAS (2018, p.5) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
3. In conjunction with the Biomedical Engineering Department, arrange and coordinate the servicing and repair of equipment.
CAS (2018, p.6) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
4. Communicate with and act as a liaison with supply companies.
CAS (2018, p.6) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
5. Maintain supply inventory.
CAS (2018, p.6) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
6. Source out supplies and equipment.
CAS (2018, p.6) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
7. Assist the Department of Anesthesia with the capital equipment budget by conducting equipment needs assessments and research.
CAS (2018, p.6) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
8. Assist in quality assurance activities and research activities as may be required.
CAS (2018, p.6) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants

Professional Responsibilities

The Anesthesia Assistant shall:

1. Participate in lifelong learning and ongoing training required to maintain competency of practice.
CSRT (2016, p.8) National Competency Framework for Anesthesia Assistance
2. Understand, and function within, professional, medical, legal and ethical guidelines and/or regulations.
CSRT (2016, p.7) National Competency Framework for Anesthesia Assistance
3. Maintain the competencies to meet the specific needs of subspecialty areas of anesthesia.
CAS (2023, section 2.5) Guidelines to the Practice of Anesthesia
4. Participate in the orientation of new operating room and postoperative care unit staff and students.
CAS (2018, p.6) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
5. Participate in the education of students and other healthcare professionals.
CSRT (2016, p.8) National Competency Framework for Anesthesia Assistance
6. Participate in in-service sessions for nursing staff and physicians on new equipment and supplies.
CAS (2018, p.6) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants
7. Attend training programs as required to maintain competencies of practice.
CAS (2018, p.6) Position Paper on Anesthesia Assistants

References

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Canadian Anesthesiologists' Society. (2018). *Position paper on anesthesia assistants: An official position paper of the Canadian Anesthesiologists' Society.*
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Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists. (2016). *National competency framework in anesthesia assistance: Validated June 2016.*
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