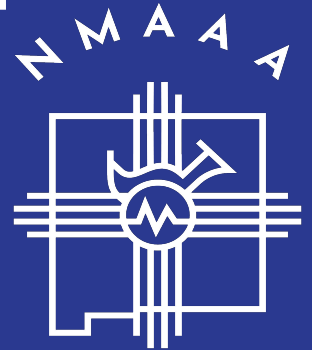


# New Mexico Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants 2022 Legislative Presentation

Speakers: Abigail Moore, CAA, MA, NMAAA President  
Cassie Langhals, CAA, MA, MMSc, NMAAA Vice President



New Mexico  
Academy of  
Anesthesiologist  
Assistants



# Who are Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants?

# CAA Highlight

“I became a CAA because I wanted to work in a profession where I can use my knowledge, experience, and critical thinking to help others get better.”

Scott Loberg, CAA


University of New Mexico Hospital,  
Albuquerque

# Who are Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants?


Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants (CAAs) are highly skilled medical professionals who, under the direction of a physician anesthesiologist, provide anesthesia care before, during, and after a patient's operation. <sup>1,2</sup>

CAAs hold a Master's degree and are board certified. This anesthesia specific training prepares them to provide high quality anesthesia care. <sup>3</sup>

CAAs champion the team approach to patient care as defined by the American Society of Anesthesiologists. Those in the Anesthesia Care Team work synergistically to provide the best possible anesthesia care for the patient. <sup>4</sup>



# CAA Education

- CAAs attend a 24-28 month in-person Master's degree program
  - All CAA programs must be affiliated with an accredited medical school. The medical director must be a board-certified Anesthesiologist.
  - CAA training includes:
    - 56-132 didactic hours (depending on the program)
    - Minimum of 2,000 clinical hours (national average is 2,500)
    - Rotations in all sub-specialties of anesthesia (Obstetrics, Pediatrics, Cardiothoracic, Trauma, Acute Pain, Orthopedics, among others)
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# CAA Board Certification

- Applicant must have good class standing and meet all graduation requirements *prior* to taking the initial certifying exam accredited by the National Commission for Certification of Anesthesiologist Assistants.
- 40 Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits submitted biennially to maintain certification
- Recertification exam required every 10 years



# How CAAs practice

- CAAs ***always*** practice in an Anesthesia Care Team model and are under direct supervision by a physician Anesthesiologist.

*“Two heads and four hands are better than one head and two hands.”*

- The importance of physician involvement during anesthesia care was reiterated in a 2018 World Health Organization-World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WHO-WFSA) article stating:

“anesthesia is complex and hazardous and its administration ‘requires a high level of expertise in medical diagnosis, pharmacology, physiology, and anatomy...therefore, the WFSA views anesthesiology as a medical practice.’ When it is possible to do so, anesthesia should always be ‘provided, led, or overseen by an anesthesiologist.’ The article also states that when anesthesia is administered by someone other than a physician anesthesiologist, those providers should be ‘directed and supervised by anesthesiologists...’”<sup>6</sup>



What do CAAs bring to  
New Mexico?



# What do CAAs bring to New Mexico?

A *safe*, team model approach to anesthesia. Any issues that may arise during patient care are managed by a team of highly skilled anesthesia professionals.<sup>4,5</sup>

The ability to educate future anesthesia personnel.<sup>2</sup>

Additional frontline healthcare personnel.

As one of two western-most states where CAAs are licensed, CAAs are attracted to jobs in New Mexico, bolstering the healthcare workforce and bringing economic development.



# CAA Highlight

“I want to practice in NM because it lets me appreciate the outdoors while still living in a city that feels more like a town. It is a great place to live and plant roots for the future.”

Chrissy Garner, CAA  
FCHS Anesthesia Group, Las Cruces



What are CAAs asking from  
New Mexico?

# What are CAAs asking from New Mexico?

**Increasing our supervisory ratio  
from 1:3 to 1:4.**

- The CMS standard is 1 physician anesthesiologist supervising 4 CAAs.
- Supported by the New Mexico Medical Board.
- The current model limits anesthesia services

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# What are CAAs asking from New Mexico?

## Removal of the sunset clause from HB 54.

- By 2025, all CAAs in NM can only be employed by the University of New Mexico.
  - This limits anesthesia services in NM, and
  - This limits CAAs who desire to live and work in NM.
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# What are CAAs asking from New Mexico?

## Allowing CAAs to work throughout NM.

- Currently, CAAs are only allowed to work in Class A counties.
    - Bernalillo, Dona Ana, San Juan, Sandoval, Santa Fe
  - State-wide licensure is the national standard.
  - This forces rural NM to rely on contract workers for anesthesia services.
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# CAA Highlight

I quickly learned why this is the land of enchantment. The kind, welcoming faces; breathtaking views; and amazing adventure scene left me praying that I would be offered a position after my interview. Since my move here, I've been able to enjoy numerous outdoor activities, dine at local restaurants and learn about the culture and history of Santa Fe. As the granddaughter of Spanish immigrants, I love the rich culture here. I knew this where I should be.

Lindsey Diaz, CAA  
Christus St. Vincent, Santa Fe

# CAA Highlight

“Seventeen years ago I left my home in the Midwest in order to practice as a CAA at the University of New Mexico Hospital where I knew my skills would be honed in providing care for the most complex patients in the region. Since then, I have married, raised a family, and plan to continue to serve my community in this incredible state!”

Kevin Kopacz, CAA  
University of New Mexico Hospital  
Albuquerque



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