



# **AST Position Statement**

Accreditation, Certification, Official Title of Profession,  
and On-the-Job Training



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## **AST Position Statement on Accreditation, Certification, Official Title of Profession, and On the Job Training**

A profession's educational base is the cornerstone of its growth and development. Providing competent, humanistic, and safe patient care as a CST demands a broad area of knowledge and intellectual skills as well as technical proficiency. The increasing complexity of surgical therapies and the expanding role of the CST require the ability to adapt to new roles and technologies. This includes applying skills in other healthcare facility departments as demonstrated during the Coronavirus disease pandemic. These increasing responsibilities demand a more broadly based educational curriculum provided by accredited programs with a foundation in both the medical sciences and liberal arts. Therefore, to remain on par with other healthcare professions, AST declares the associate degree in surgical technology to be the educational model for entry-level practice.

To maintain the expectation of students completing an associate degree, AST supports the surgical technology program accreditation process administered by the Accreditation Review Council on Education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (ARC/STSA), a collaborative effort of AST and the American College of Surgeons (ACS) under the auspices of the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). Accreditation confirms that a program has attained high standards in surgical technology education that is to the benefit of the public, healthcare community, and students. AST supports that all surgical technology programs should be accredited, and all students should attend an accredited program to be able to learn the skills needed to provide safe, quality patient care.

Completing an accredited program ensures the graduate is eligible to take the surgical technology certification examination offered by the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA), an independent body consisting of a collaborative effort of representative CSTs, a surgeon, and public member. AST fully supports the NBSTSA surgical technology national certifying examination and its value to the surgical technology practitioner, as well as its benefit to the public, healthcare community, and healthcare institutions. AST considers the CST credential as the established national credential and individuals who perform the role and duties of the surgical technologist should attain the credential. Additionally, healthcare employers should take into consideration when hiring an individual that they have attained the CST credential and should seek to achieve the goal of only employing individuals with the CST credential.

It is the position of AST that the official title of healthcare professionals in the profession of surgical technology is "surgical technologist" that is nationally recognized by the ARC/STSA including the collaborating sponsors ACS and CAAHEP, and the NBSTSA who awards the CST credential for those who successfully pass the national surgical technology certifying

examination. The primary role of surgical technologists is the first scrub role that is considered an essential function as a member of the sterile surgical team and individuals fulfilling this role are considered as practicing surgical technology. Not all healthcare facilities and organizations use the correct title of the profession. Therefore, AST advocates that healthcare professionals who practice surgical technology be properly titled surgical technologist and the correct title of those who have passed the certifying examination and maintain their certification is Certified Surgical Technologist.

*Therefore, be it resolved,* because of the important roles that CSTs fulfill in the operating room as well as in other healthcare facility departments and the workforce shortage that has placed additional pressure on healthcare facilities to continue to meet the patient workload in the surgery department, it is that much more imperative that the healthcare facilities hire graduates of a surgical technology program that is accredited by a nationally recognizable programmatic accreditation institution who already possess the CST credential or are eligible to pursue the CST credential.

*Be it resolved,* for CSTs to be able to properly assist surgeons, surgical technology education must maintain a high level of educational standards that does not include on-the-job training.

*Be it resolved,* that graduates of accredited surgical technology programs have attained a high-level of critical thinking and multitasking skills that are applied daily to provide safe patient care that on-the-job trained individuals will not be able to attain. Competent and humanistic practice as a CST demands a broad area of knowledge and the development of intellectual skills combined with technical proficiency that **only** graduates of accredited programs can achieve.

*Be it resolved,* that the safest patient care can only be provided by an individual that has attained the title of “surgical technologist” who has completed formal education through an accredited program and has successfully passed the NBSTSA certification exam to earn the “CST” credential.