



MASSACHUSETTS SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST LAW

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question: Who may health care facilities hire to practice surgical technology in Massachusetts?

Answer: On the effective date of the legislation, to practice as a surgical technologist in Massachusetts, a surgical technologist must provide evidence to his or her employer of meeting **one** of following requirements:

- (1) The individual has successfully completed an accredited educational program for surgical technologists **and** holds and maintains a Certified Surgical Technologist credential administered by a nationally recognized surgical technologist certifying body accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies and recognized by the American College of Surgeons and the Association of Surgical Technologists;
- (2) The individual has successfully completed an accredited school of surgical technology but has not, as of the date of hire, obtained the certified surgical technologist certification required in clause (1); provided that such certification shall be obtained within 12 months of the graduation date;
- (3) The individual was employed as a surgical technologist in a surgical facility on July 1, 2013;
- (4) The individual has successfully completed a training program for surgical technology in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps or Coast Guard of the United States or in the United States Public Health Service which has been deemed appropriate by the commissioner; or
- (5) The individual is performing surgical technology tasks or functions in the service of the federal government, but only to the extent the person is performing duties related to that service.

Questions: Which certified surgical technologist certifying body is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies and recognized by the American College of Surgeons and the Association of Surgical Technologists?

Answer: The Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) credential, administered by the [National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting](#), is the only credential administered by a nationally-recognized surgical technologist certifying body accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies and recognized by the American College of Surgeons and the Association of Surgical Technologists.

Question: How does a person determine if a surgical technologist educational program is accredited?

Answer: Two organizations accredit surgical technology programs: the [Commission on Accreditation of Health Education Programs \(CAAHEP\)](#) and the [Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools \(ABHES\)](#). The [CAAHEP](#) and [ABHES](#) websites list which programs currently hold accreditation. A surgical technology program may hold dual accreditation from both CAAHEP and ABHES; however, the program needs only to be accredited by one of these entities to meet the requirements of the law.



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Question: May a health care facility employ a person who holds CST certification, but did not graduate from an accredited surgical technology program?

Answer: No. A person must both graduate from an accredited surgical technology program and hold the CST credential administered by the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting.

Question: May health care facilities require the CST credential as a condition of employment, even if an individual was practicing surgical technology on July 1, 2013?

Answer: Yes. Health care facilities may require the CST credential for all individuals practicing surgical technology.

Question: Does the requirement for surgical technologist education and certification apply to OB Technicians?

Answer: Yes, if the OB technician performs tasks as listed below, such as during a cesarean section, hysterectomy, tubal ligation and D&C. A person must be the requirements of the law if he or she performs any of the following tasks and is not otherwise licensed in Massachusetts as a health care provider acting within the scope of such person's license: prepares the operating room by gathering and preparing sterile supplies, instruments and equipment, preparing and maintaining the sterile field and ensuring that surgical equipment is functioning properly and safely; responds to the needs of a surgeon and other team members by monitoring the sterile field and providing the required instruments or supplies; and performance of tasks at the sterile field, including: (1) passing supplies, equipment or instruments; (2) sponging or suctioning an operative site; (3) preparing and cutting suture material; (4) transferring and irrigating with fluids; (5) transferring, but not administering, drugs within the sterile field; (6) handling specimens; (7) holding retractors; and (8) counting sponges, needles, supplies and instruments.

Question: May a health care facility hire a person who recently graduated from an accredited surgical technology program but has not passed the certification exam yet?

Answer: Yes. If a person recently graduated from an accredited surgical technology program, a health care facility may employ that person from the date of his or her graduation until 12 months after his or her graduation. By the one-year anniversary of the individual's graduation date, he or she must obtain the Certified Surgical Technologist credential to continue to work as a surgical technologist.

Question: May a health care facility hire a person who is not certified, but was practicing as a surgical technologist in a health care facility on July 1, 2013?

Answer: Yes. The Massachusetts law states a health care facility may hire someone to practice surgical technology if he or she was employed *as a surgical technologist* in a health care facility on July 1, 2013. However, the law does not prohibit health care facilities from requiring all surgical technologists to hold the CST credential. Health care facilities may require all surgical technologists graduate from an accredited surgical technology program and hold CST certification.



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Question: May a health care facility hire a person who is not certified, but was trained as a surgical technologist in the U.S. Armed Forces?

Answer: Yes, if the U.S. military surgical technology training program is deemed appropriate by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Commissioner. As of January 2013, the Commissioner has not yet promulgated regulations or deemed any surgical technology training programs appropriate.

Question: May a person who was employed to practice surgical technology on July 1, 2013, but does meet the other qualifications in the law, switch facilities?

Answer: To practice as a surgical technologist in Massachusetts, a surgical technologist must provide evidence to his or her employer that he or she was *employed as a surgical technologist* in a surgical facility on July 1, 2013. Therefore, individuals who had a different job title, such as perioperative assistant or OB technician, may not switch facilities by being grandfathered in as a surgical technologist. He or she must graduate from an accredited program and be appropriately certified as a CST to switch facilities and work as a surgical technologist.

Question: Do other licensed health practitioners need to graduate from an accredited surgical technology program and earn the CST credential to practice as a surgical technologist?

Answer: No. The law allows a registered nurse or other licensed health care practitioner to perform surgical technology tasks or functions *if the individual is acting within the scope of his or her license*.

Question: How does a person earn the Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) credential?

Answer: The customary pathway for earning the CST is attending a [CAAHEP](#)- or [ABHES](#)- accredited surgical technology program and taking the CST exam administered by the [National Board for Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting](#). Visit www.nbstsa.org for more information.

Question: Which accelerated surgical technology educational programs are available to individuals with on-the-job training who would like to achieve education and certification?

Answer: Yes. Visit www.arcstsa.org for a list of accredited, accelerated, alternate delivery programs. Distance learning programs are available.

Question: When is the effective date of the law?

Answer: July 1, 2013.

Question: Where can the text of the law be found?

Answer: As of January 3, 2013 the official statute is not yet available. The Senate Counsel version of the legislation is available at [this link](#).

Please note: The Association of Surgical Technologists provides this information on an educational basis and does not offer legal advice. AST recommends that individuals or health care facilities consult with their attorneys for answers to legal questions