Which surgical assistant educational programs are approved for Texas surgical assistant licensure?

The Texas Medical Board determines which programs meet their requirements. The Texas Medical Board must adhere to the following regulations: “[The applicant] must have successfully completed an educational program as set forth in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of this paragraph [to be eligible for licensure];

(A) A surgical assistant program accredited by [Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)]; or

(B) A substantially equivalent program that is one of the following:

   (i) a medical school whereby the applicant can verify completion of basic and clinical sciences coursework;

   (ii) a registered nurse first assistant program that is approved by the Texas Board of Nursing for purposes of licensure as a registered nurse by; and

   (iii) an accredited surgical physician assistant program that is approved by the Texas Physician Assistant Board for purposes of physician assistant licensure.

(C) The curriculum of an educational program listed in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of this paragraph must include at a minimum, either as a part of that curriculum or as a required prerequisite, successful completion of college level instruction in the following courses:

   (i) anatomy; (ii) physiology; (iii) basic pharmacology; (iv) aseptic techniques; (v) operative procedures; (vi) chemistry; (vii) microbiology; and (viii) pathophysiology.”

What is the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)?

CAAHEP accredits allied health education programs and is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the U.S. organization of colleges and universities that approves accrediting organizations, like CAAHEP. More than 460 programs in surgical technology are CAAHEP-accredited nationwide. www.caahep.org.

Where can I find a list of CAAHEP-accredited programs?

Visit www.caahep.org, then select Find an Accredited Program.
Does the applicant have to hold surgical assistant certification to obtain licensure?

Yes, the applicant must be currently certified by a national certifying board approved by the Board and the applicant must provide documentation that the applicant has passed a surgical first assistant examination required for certification by one of the following certifying boards:

1. National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA);
2. American Board of Surgical Assistants; or
3. National Surgical Assistant Association provided that the exam was administered on or after March 29, 2003.

Which credentials are granted by the surgical assistant certifying boards?
The National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting confers the Certified Surgical First Assistant (CSFA) credential; the American Board of Surgical Assistants confers the Surgical Assistant-Certified (SA-C) credential; and the National Surgical Assistant Association confers the Certified Surgical Assistant (CSA) credential.

Is an Associate's Degree required for licensure?
Yes. The applicant must have been awarded at least an associate's degree from a two or four year institution of higher education.

What are the work experience requirements for licensure?
The applicant must demonstrate completion of full-time work experience performed in the United States under the direct supervision of a physician consisting of at least 2,000 hours of performance as an assistant in surgical procedures for the three years preceding the date of the application.

Why is it easier for CSFAs than CSAs to obtain licensure in Texas? One of the qualifications to sit for the CSFA exam, administered by the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting, is graduation from a CAAHEP-accredited program. Graduation from a CAAHEP-accredited program is the primary educational standard for Texas surgical assistant licensure.

Who is eligible to sit for the NBSTSA's CSFA exam?
The eligibility options to qualify to take the CSFA exam are as follows: a person may take the exam if he or she is: 1.) a current or previously Certified Surgical First Assistant; 2.) a graduate from a CAAHEP-accredited surgical assistant program; or 3.) a current Certified Surgical Technology (CST) and has at least 350 cases and two full years of surgical first assistant experience during the last four years.

Do all states that license surgical assistants recognize the NBSTSA's CSFA credential?
Yes. All states and districts that license surgical assistants recognize the CSFA credential administered by the NBSTSA, including the District of Columbia, Illinois, Kentucky and Texas.