

Dental Assisting Functions List

The following is a list of 70 dental assisting tasks developed by the ADA/DANB Alliance in the course of its research. These selected tasks were determined to be representative of a broad range of dental assisting core competencies.

Functions in each state that correspond to the national Core Competencies Study functions are **numbered** in the Career Ladder Template, using language directly from the state's dental practice act. Functions listed with **bullets** in the *Career Ladder Template* are part of the state's practice act but are not specific matches to DANB research.

1. Perform mouth mirror inspection of the oral cavity
2. Chart existing restorations or conditions
3. Phone in prescriptions at the direction of the dentist
4. Receive and prepare patients for treatment, including seating, positioning chair, and placing napkin
5. Complete laboratory authorization forms
6. Place and remove retraction cord
7. Perform routine maintenance of dental equipment
8. Monitor and respond to post-surgical bleeding
9. Perform coronal polishing procedures
10. Apply effective communication techniques with a variety of patients
11. Transfer dental instruments
12. Place amalgam for condensation by the dentist
13. Remove sutures
14. Dry canals
15. Tie in archwires
16. Demonstrate knowledge of ethics/jurisprudence/patient confidentiality
17. Identify features of rotary instruments
18. Apply topical fluoride
19. Select and manipulate gypsums and waxes
20. Perform supragingival scaling
21. Mix dental materials
22. Expose radiographs
23. Evaluate radiographs for diagnostic quality
24. Provide patient preventive education and oral hygiene instruction
25. Perform sterilization and disinfection procedures
26. Provide pre- and post-operative instructions
27. Place and remove dental dam
28. Pour, trim, and evaluate the quality of diagnostic casts
29. Size and place orthodontic bands and brackets
30. Using the concepts of four-handed dentistry, assist with basic restorative procedures, including prosthodontics and restorative dentistry
31. Identify intraoral anatomy
32. Demonstrate understanding of the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard
33. Place, cure and finish composite resin restorations
34. Place liners and bases
35. Place periodontal dressings
36. Demonstrate understanding of the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard
37. Take and record vital signs
38. Monitor vital signs
39. Clean and polish removable appliances and prostheses
40. Apply pit and fissure sealants
41. Prepare procedural trays/armamentaria set-ups
42. Place orthodontic separators
43. Size and fit stainless steel crowns
44. Take preliminary impressions
45. Place and remove matrix bands
46. Take final impressions
47. Fabricate and place temporary crowns
48. Maintain field of operation during dental procedures through the use of retraction, suction, irrigation, drying, placing and removing cotton rolls, etc.
49. Perform vitality tests
50. Place temporary fillings
51. Carve amalgams
52. Process dental radiographs
53. Mount and label dental radiographs
54. Remove temporary crowns and cements
55. Remove temporary fillings
56. Apply topical anesthetic to the injection site
57. Demonstrate understanding of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guidelines
58. Using the concepts of four-handed dentistry, assist with basic intraoral surgical procedures, including extractions, periodontics, endodontics, and implants
59. Monitor nitrous oxide/oxygen analgesia
60. Maintain emergency kit
61. Remove permanent cement from supragingival surfaces
62. Remove periodontal dressings
63. Place post-extraction dressings
64. Fabricate custom trays, to include impression and bleaching trays, and athletic mouthguards
65. Recognize basic medical emergencies
66. Recognize basic dental emergencies
67. Respond to basic medical emergencies
68. Respond to basic dental emergencies
69. Remove post-extraction dressings
70. Place stainless steel crown



Levels of Supervision

An important consideration in the discussion of the delegation of tasks to dental assistants is that of supervision of dental assistants by their dentist-employers. The American Dental Association (ADA) has identified four levels of supervision for dental auxiliaries, including dental assistants, which it defines in its “Comprehensive Policy Statement on Allied Dental Personnel,” (2006: 307) which is part of its *Current Policies*, last updated in 2007. Note that “allied dental personnel” refers to dental assistants, dental hygienists and dental laboratory technicians.

The four levels of supervision defined by the ADA are as follows:

Personal supervision: A dentist is personally operating on a patient and authorizes the allied dental personnel to aid treatment by concurrently performing a supportive procedure.

Direct supervision: A dentist is in the dental office or treatment facility, personally diagnoses the condition to be treated, personally authorizes the procedures, and remains in the dental office or treatment facility while the procedures are being performed by the allied dental personnel and, before dismissal of the patient, evaluates the performance of the allied dental personnel.

Indirect supervision: A dentist is in the dental office or treatment facility, has personally diagnosed the condition to be treated, authorizes the procedures, and remains in the dental office or treatment facility while the procedures are being performed by the allied dental personnel, and will evaluate the performance of the allied dental personnel.

General supervision: A dentist is not required to be in the dental office or treatment facility when procedures are being performed by the allied dental personnel, but has personally diagnosed the condition to be treated, has personally authorized the procedures and will evaluate the performance of the allied dental personnel.

Furthermore, the ADA’s Comprehensive Policy Statement on Allied Dental Personnel stipulates that intraoral expanded functions should be performed by allied dental personnel “only under the direct supervision of a dentist.”



Because the study of dental assisting core competencies undertaken by the ADAA/DANB Alliance did not address the question of supervision, the ADAA/DANB Alliance does not make any recommendations as to the levels of supervision that should be necessary for the delegation of the tasks included in the study to dental assistants. However, the ADAA/DANB Alliance believes it is important to call attention to the fact that, while the ADA has defined supervision levels in the aforementioned policy statement, which governs the ADA’s own activities and the activities of its members, these definitions have not been uniformly adopted by the dental boards of every U.S. state or district.

For the purposes of this volume, if a state’s dental practice act specifically defines levels of supervision, the state-specific definition is noted in the template.



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| Education/Training/ Credential Required | Job Title According to State of NE | Proposed Standardized National Job Titles (see below) | Radiography Requirements | Functions <u>NOT</u> Permitted by Dental Assistants in NE |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| <p>To perform coronal polishing procedures under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist in the state of Nebraska, a dental assistant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate from a CODA-accredited dental assisting program which includes a coronal polishing course <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete one year (1,500 hours minimum) of clinical work experience as a dental assistant and a Nebraska Board-approved course in polishing procedures | <p>Dental Assistant <i>qualified in coronal polishing</i></p> | <p>Expanded Functions Dental Assistant (EFDA)</p> | <p>To legally operate dental x-ray equipment and perform dental radiographic procedures in the state of Nebraska, a dental assistant <u>must</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully complete a two-day course approved by the Nebraska Board of Dentistry and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Regulation and Licensure <p>OR</p> <p>Pass the national DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) exam</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Successfully complete a dental assisting course from a CODA-approved technical program or community college which provides training in dental radiography as part of its curriculum</p> | <p>The following functions are not permitted by any level of dental assistant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12, 33. Placing or contouring of a final restoration 20. Scaling of teeth, including subgingival regions and root planing with hand and ultrasonic instruments Diagnosis and treatment planning Surgery on hard or soft tissue Administering of local or general anesthetics Any other irreversible dental procedure or procedures which require the professional judgment and skill of a licensed dentist Any intraoral procedure which would lead to the fabrication of any prosthesis Chemical curettage |
| <p>A dental assistant in the state of Nebraska may perform basic supportive dental procedures specified by the state dental practice act (see opposite page) under the direct or general supervision of a licensed dentist.</p> <p>There are no education or training requirements for this level of dental assisting.</p> <p>Note: All dental assistants must be 18 years of age. Dental assistants who monitor nitrous oxide analgesia must hold a current Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification.</p> | <p>Dental Assistant</p> | <p>DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) or Registered Dental Assistant (RDA)</p> <p>Dental Assistant</p> <p>Entry Level Dental Assistant</p> | <p> The ADAA/DANB Alliance developed a listing of standardized job titles (left) based on its national Core Competencies Study conducted from 2002-2005.</p> <p>The same study utilized a list of 70 job functions which were determined to be representative of a broad range of dental assisting core competencies.</p> <p>Functions in this state that relate to the national DANB/ADAA Core Competencies Study are numbered to the right, using language directly from this state's dental practice act. (The numbers correspond to the study's task numbering system.) </p> <p>Functions listed with bullets are part of this state's practice act but are not specific matches to DANB/ADAA research.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>These state templates reflect the work being done by the ADAA/DANB Alliance to support a uniform national model for one set of dental assisting tasks, levels and requirements, which will serve as a viable career ladder for dental assistants.</p> </div> | |

| Job Title According to State of NE | Allowable Functions (Functions with numbers relate specifically to Core Competency designations; functions with bullets are in this state's practice act but are not specific matches to DANB research) |
|--|---|
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Dental Assistant qualified in coronal polishing

Under Direct Supervision*

- 9. Coronal polishing

Dental Assistant

Under Direct or General Supervision**

- A licensed dentist may delegate to dental assistants only those procedures for which the dentist exercises supervision and assumes full responsibility

DANB's Note on Allowable Dental Assisting Functions

In the state of Nebraska, all dental assistants may:

- Perform infection control and occupational safety procedures
- Perform other duties not specified by this state's dental practice act

At this time, DANB cannot list all allowable dental assisting functions for each state because some states' dental practice acts outline very specific allowable functions, while others outline only prohibited functions and some contain minimal or no regulation of dental assisting duties.

*Direct Supervision: A dentist is in the office and evaluates the patient during the same visit.
**General Supervision: A dentist has authorized a procedure but is not necessarily in the office.