

Dental Assisting Functions List

The following is a list of 70 dental assisting tasks developed by the ADAA/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 WV	Proposed Standardized National Job Titles (see below)	Radiography Requirements	Functions NOT Permitted by Dental Assistants in WV
<p>A dental assistant in the state of West Virginia may qualify to perform the expanded duties listed on the opposite page upon completing a course and exam in each of the desired expanded duties. The course must be approved by the West Virginia Board of Dental Examiners (WVBDE).</p> <p>Note: Dental assistants who visually monitor nitrous oxide analgesia units are also required to hold current Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification through the American Red Cross or the American Heart Association and apply to the WVBDE for approval.</p> <p>A dental assistant who has completed two years and at least 3,000 hours of clinical experience in a dental office, as attested to by the supervising dentist, and who has successfully completed either the restorative expanded duties course or orthodontic expanded duties course required by the WVBDE, may perform supragingival and coronal polishing on children under age 21 years of age using a slow hand piece with a rubber cup after successfully completing a course approved by the WVBDE.</p>	<p>Dental Assistant <i>qualified in expanded duties</i></p>	<p>Expanded Functions Dental Assistant (EFDA)</p>	<p>There are no radiography requirements for dental assistants in the state of West Virginia.</p> <p>All dental assistants may legally operate dental x-ray equipment and perform dental radiographic procedures.</p>	<p>The following functions are not permitted by any level of dental assistant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis, treatment planning and prescription (including prescriptions for drugs and medicaments or authorizations for restorative, prosthodontic or orthodontic appliances) • Surgical procedures on hard and soft tissue within the oral cavity or any other intraoral procedure that contributes to or results in an irremediable alteration of the oral anatomy
<p>A dental assistant in the state of West Virginia may perform basic supportive dental procedures specified by the state dental practice act (see opposite page) under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist.</p> <p>There are no education or training requirements for this level of dental assisting.</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 WV	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)		
Dental Assistant qualified in expanded duties	<p><u>Under Direct Supervision*</u></p> <p>6. Placing retraction cords for crown impressions with prior approval of the supervising dentist</p> <p>9. Using a power-driven hand piece with rubber cup and/or brush only for preparing a tooth for accepting a restoration and/or appliance, which shall in no way be represented to the patient as a prophylaxis</p> <p>9. Perform supragingival and coronal polishing on children under 21 years of age using a slow speed hand piece with a rubber cup</p> <p>29, 42. Placing or removing temporary space maintainers, orthodontic separating devices, ligatures, brackets and bands with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist at the time of placement or removal</p> <p>40. Applying pit and fissure sealants, with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist</p> <p>59. Visually monitoring a nitrous oxide analgesia unit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying topical anticariogenic agents, with prior approval of the supervising dentist • Chemical conditioning of the tooth to accept a restoration and/or bracket by topical application 		
	<p><u>Under Direct Supervision*</u></p> <p>1. Viewing the oral cavity and reporting the symptoms/problems to the supervising dentist</p> <p>2. Charting existing restorations and missing teeth</p> <p>13. Holding and removing materials, trays, strips and sutures previously placed in the patient's mouth by the dentist</p> <p>22, 52, 53. Placing, exposing, developing and mounting dental radiographs</p> <p>26. Providing pre- and post-treatment instructions</p> <p>27. Placing and removing rubber dams</p> <p>29. Fitting bands and brackets prior to final cementation and/or bonding by the supervising dentist</p> <p>34. Applying cavity liners and bases with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist</p> <p>40. Applying pit and fissure sealants with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist</p> <p>44. Taking impressions for study cast and pouring models</p> <p>45. Placing and removing matrices after a final evaluation by the supervising dentist</p> <p>46. Taking final impressions for fixed or removable prosthesis and/or appliance with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist</p> <p>47. Fabricating and cementing temporary crowns and bridges with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist</p> <p>49. Performing pulp vitality testing (thermal or electrical) with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist</p> <p>50, 55. Placing and removing temporary restorations by a non power-driven method with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist</p> <p>54, 61. Removing excess cement from coronal surfaces of teeth without the use of rotating, power-driven or scaling instruments</p> <p>56. Applying topical anesthetic agents with prior approval by the supervising dentist</p> <p>62. Removing periodontal dressings with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recording medical and dental histories for interpretation by the supervising dentist • Inserting and adjusting athletic mouth guards and bleaching trays with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist • Removing soft tissue dressings with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist • Taking intra oral and extra oral photographs • Checking for loose orthodontic appliances with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist • Taking orthodontic measurements with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist • Bending archwires with a final evaluation by the supervising dentist at the time of placement • Removing loose or broken bands, brackets or archwires when directed by the supervising dentist 		

*Direct Supervision: Supervision is provided by a licensed dentist who is physically present in the dental office.