

DENTAL ASSISTING CATEGORIES
EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2010

Starting January 1, 2010, dental assisting scope of practice includes new duties and two new “add-on” specialty permits in orthodontics and dental sedation, for which all categories of dental assistants are eligible to obtain after completing required instruction. Along with the new duties, licensure and license renewal requirements have changed for registered dental assistants and registered dental assistants in extended functions. Dentist employers are also responsible for ensuring that unlicensed dental assistants hired on or after January 1, 2010, provide proof of course completion in the California Dental Practice Act (CDPA) and Infection Control for Dental Assistants (8-hour) within 12 months of employment and that dental assistants maintain certification in basic life support. The CDPA and Infection Control for Dental Assistant courses are one-time only requirements and dental assistants who have completed the required courses should keep evidence of completion in their files for all future employers’ records.

AUTHORIZED DUTIES

DENTAL ASSISTANT

(Business & Professions Code §1750)

A dental assistant is an individual who, without a license, may perform basic supportive dental procedures, as authorized by law and by regulations adopted by the Dental Board, under the supervision of a licensed dentist. "Basic supportive dental procedures" are those procedures that have technically elementary characteristics, are completely reversible, and are unlikely to precipitate potentially hazardous conditions for the patient being treated.

General Supervision Duties

1. Extra-oral duties or procedures specified by the supervising licensed dentist, provided that these duties or procedures meet the definition of a basic supportive procedure
2. Operate dental radiography equipment for the purpose of oral radiography if the dental assistant has completed an approved radiation safety course or passed a radiation safety exam.
3. Perform intraoral and extraoral photography.

Direct Supervision Duties

1. Apply nonaerosol and noncaustic topical agents.
2. Apply topical fluoride.
3. Take intraoral impressions for all non-prosthetic appliances.
4. Take facebow transfers and bite registrations.
5. Place and remove rubber dams or other isolation devices.
6. Place, wedge, and remove matrices for restorative procedures.
7. Remove post-extraction dressings after inspection of the surgical site by the supervising licensed dentist.
8. Perform measurements for the purposes of orthodontic treatment.
9. Cure restorative or orthodontic materials in operative site with a light-curing device.
10. Examine orthodontic appliances.
11. Place and remove orthodontic separators.
12. Remove ligature ties and archwires.
13. After adjustment by the dentist, examine and seat removable orthodontic appliances and deliver care instructions to the patient.
14. Remove periodontal dressings.
15. Remove sutures after inspection of the site by the dentist.
16. Place patient monitoring sensors.
17. Monitor patient sedation, limited to reading and transmitting information from the monitor display during the intraoperative phase of surgery for electrocardiogram waveform, carbon dioxide and end tidal carbon dioxide concentrations, respiratory cycle data, continuous noninvasive blood pressure data, or pulse arterial oxygen saturation measurements, for the purpose of interpretation and evaluation by a supervising licensed dentist who shall be at the patient's chairside during this procedure.
18. Assist in the administration of nitrous oxide when used for analgesia or sedation. A dental assistant shall not start the administration of the gases and shall not adjust the flow of the gases unless instructed to do so by the supervising licensed dentist who shall be present at the patient's chairside during the implementation of these instructions.

Under the supervision of a registered dental hygienist in alternative practice, a dental assistant may perform intraoral retraction and suctioning.

The board may specify additional allowable duties by regulation.

The duties of a dental assistant or a dental assistant holding a permit in orthodontic assisting or in dental sedation do not include any of the following procedures unless specifically allowed by law:

1. Diagnosis and comprehensive treatment planning.
2. Placing, finishing, or removing permanent restorations.
3. Surgery or cutting on hard and soft tissue including, but not limited to, the removal of teeth and the cutting and suturing of soft tissue.
4. Prescribing medication.
5. Starting or adjusting local or general anesthesia or oral or parenteral conscious sedation, except for the administration of nitrous oxide and oxygen, whether administered alone or in combination with each other and except as otherwise provided by law.

Requirements of the Dentist Supervising/Employing a Dental Assistant

The supervising licensed dentist is responsible for determining the competency of the dental assistant to perform basic supportive dental procedures. The employer of a dental assistant is responsible for ensuring that the dental assistant who has been in continuous employment for 120 days or more, has already successfully completed, or successfully completes, all of the following within a year of the date of employment:

1. A board-approved course in the Dental Practice Act.
2. A board-approved course in infection control (8-hour).
3. A course in basic life support offered by an instructor approved by the American Red Cross or the American Heart Association, or any other course approved by the board as equivalent and that provides the student the opportunity to engage in hands-on simulated clinical scenarios.

The employer must ensure the dental assistant maintains certification in basic life support.

REGISTERED DENTAL ASSISTANT

(Business & Professions Code §1752.4)

A registered dental assistant may perform all of the following duties:

1. All duties that a dental assistant is allowed to perform.
2. Mouth-mirror inspections of the oral cavity, to include charting of obvious lesions, existing restorations, and missing teeth.
3. Apply and activate bleaching agents using a nonlaser light-curing device.
4. Use of automated caries detection devices and materials to gather information for diagnosis by the dentist.
5. Obtain intraoral images for computer-aided design (CAD), milled restorations.
6. Pulp vitality testing and recording of findings.
7. Place bases, liners, and bonding agents.
8. Chemically prepare teeth for bonding.
9. Place, adjust, and finish direct provisional restorations.
10. Fabricate, adjust, cement, and remove indirect provisional restorations, including stainless steel crowns when used as a provisional restoration.
11. Place post-extraction dressings after inspection of the surgical site by the supervising licensed dentist.
12. Place periodontal dressings.
13. Dry endodontically treated canals using absorbent paper points.
14. Adjust dentures extra-orally.
15. Remove excess cement from surfaces of teeth with a hand instrument.
16. Polish coronal surfaces of the teeth.
17. Place ligature ties and archwires.
18. Remove orthodontic bands.
19. All duties that the board may prescribe by regulation.

A registered dental assistant may only perform the following additional duties if he or she has completed a board-approved educational program in those duties:

1. Remove excess cement with an ultrasonic scaler from supragingival surfaces of teeth undergoing orthodontic treatment.
2. The allowable duties of an orthodontic assistant permit-holder. A registered dental assistant shall not be required to complete further instruction in the duties of placing ligature ties and archwires, removing orthodontic bands, and removing excess cement from tooth surfaces with a hand instrument.
3. The allowable duties of a dental sedation assistant permit-holder.
4. The application of pit and fissure sealants.

Except as provided in Business & Professions Code §1777, the supervising dentist shall be responsible for determining whether each authorized procedure performed by a registered dental assistant should be performed under general or direct supervision.

REGISTERED DENTAL ASSISTANT IN EXTENDED FUNCTIONS

(Business & Professions Code §1753.4)

On and after January 1, 2010, each person who holds a current and active registered dental assistant in extended functions license issued prior to January 1, 2010, who wishes to perform the duties specified below (B&P Section 1753.5) in (1), (2), (5), and (7) to (11), inclusive, must successfully complete an examination described in the "Licensure Requirements" section of this document.

(Business & Professions Code §1753.5)

A registered dental assistant in extended functions licensed on or after January 1, 2010, is authorized to perform all duties and procedures that a registered dental assistant is authorized to perform. A registered dental assistant in extended functions licensed on or after January 1, 2010 may perform the following additional procedures under *direct* supervision and pursuant to the order, control, and full professional responsibility of a licensed dentist:

1. Conduct preliminary evaluation of the patient's oral health, including, but not limited to, charting, intraoral and extra-oral evaluation of soft tissue, classifying occlusion, and myofunctional evaluation.
2. Perform oral health assessments in school-based, community health project settings under the direction of a dentist, registered dental hygienist, or registered dental hygienist in alternative practice.
3. Cord retraction of gingiva for impression procedures.
4. Size and fit endodontic master points and accessory points.
5. Cement endodontic master points and accessory points.
6. Take final impressions for permanent indirect restorations.
7. Take final impressions for tooth-borne removable prosthesis.
8. Polish and contour existing amalgam restorations.
9. Place, contour, finish, and adjust all direct restorations.
10. Adjust and cement permanent indirect restorations.
11. Other procedures authorized by regulations adopted by the board.

All procedures required to be performed under direct supervision shall be checked and approved by the supervising licensed dentist prior to the patient's dismissal from the office.

A licensed dentist may simultaneously utilize in his or her practice no more than three registered dental assistants in extended functions or registered dental hygienists in extended. *(Business & Professions Code §1753.7)*

Employment/Practice at Primary Care Clinics

Business & Professions Code §1777: While employed by or practicing in a primary care clinic or specialty clinic licensed pursuant to Section 1204 of the Health and Safety Code, in a primary care clinic exempt from licensure pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 1206 of the Health and Safety Code, or a clinic owned and operated by a hospital that maintains the primary contract with a county government to fill the county's role under Section 17000 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, the following shall apply:

- (a) A dental assistant, registered dental assistant, or registered dental assistant in extended functions may perform any extra-oral duty under the direct supervision of a registered dental hygienist or registered dental hygienist in alternative practice.

- (b) A registered dental assistant or a registered dental assistant in extended functions may perform the following procedures under the direct supervision of a registered dental hygienist or a registered dental hygienist in alternative practice, pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 1763:
- (1) Coronal polishing.
 - (2) Application of topical fluoride.
 - (3) Application of sealants, after providing evidence to the board of having completed a board-approved course in that procedure.

SPECIALTY ASSISTANT PERMITS

Orthodontic

(Business & Professions Code §1750.3)

A DA, RDA, or RDAEF holding an orthodontic assistant permit may perform the following duties under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist:

1. All duties that a dental assistant is allowed to perform.
2. Prepare teeth for bonding, and select, preposition, and cure orthodontic brackets after their position has been approved by the supervising licensed dentist.
3. Remove only orthodontic brackets and attachments with removal of the bonding material by the supervising licensed dentist.
4. Size, fit, and cement orthodontic bands.
5. Remove orthodontic bands and remove excess cement from supragingival surfaces of teeth with a hand instrument.
6. Place and ligate archwires.
7. Remove excess cement with an ultrasonic scaler from supragingival surfaces of teeth undergoing orthodontic treatment.
8. Any additional duties that the board may prescribe by regulation.

Dental Sedation

(Business & Professions Code §1750.5)

A DA, RDA, or RDAEF holding a dental sedation assistant permit may perform the following duties under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist or other licensed health care professional authorized to administer conscious sedation or general anesthesia in the dental office:

1. All duties that a dental assistant is allowed to perform.
2. Monitor patients undergoing conscious sedation or general anesthesia utilizing data from noninvasive instrumentation such as pulse oximeters, electrocardiograms, capnography, blood pressure, pulse, and respiration rate monitoring devices. Evaluation of the condition of a sedated patient shall remain the responsibility of the dentist or other licensed health care professional authorized to administer conscious sedation or general anesthesia, who shall be at the patient's chairside while conscious sedation or general anesthesia is being administered.
3. Drug identification and draw, limited to identification of appropriate medications, ampule and vial preparation, and withdrawing drugs of correct amount as verified by the supervising licensed dentist.
4. Add drugs, medications, and fluids to intravenous lines using a syringe, provided that a supervising licensed dentist is present at the patient's chairside, limited to determining patency of intravenous line, selection of injection port, syringe insertion into injection port, occlusion of intravenous line and blood aspiration, line release and injection of drugs for appropriate time interval. The exception to this duty is that the initial dose of a drug or medication shall be administered by the supervising licensed dentist.
5. Removal of intravenous lines.
6. Any additional duties that the board may prescribe by regulation.
7. The duties listed in numbers (2) to (5), inclusive, may not be performed in any setting other than a dental office or dental clinic.

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

Dental Assistant

Although the dental assistant is an unlicensed dental professional, the employer of a dental assistant is responsible for ensuring that the dental assistant who has been hired on or after January 1, 2010 and in continuous employment for 120 days or more, has already successfully completed, or successfully completes, all of the following within a year of the date of employment:

1. A board-approved course in the Dental Practice Act.
2. A board-approved course in infection control (8-hour).
3. A course in basic life support (BLS) offered by an instructor approved by the American Red Cross or the American Heart Association, or any other course approved by the board as equivalent and that provides the student the opportunity to engage in hands-on simulated clinical scenarios. Dental assistants hired on or after January 1, 2010 must keep their BLS certification current.

Dental Assistant with Specialty Permit(s)

(Business & Professions Code §1750.2 and 1750.4)

Orthodontic Assistant Permit

1. Completion of at least 12 months of work experience as a dental assistant.
2. Successful completion of board-approved courses in the Dental Practice Act and infection control (8-hour), respectively.
3. Successful completion of a course in basic life support offered by an instructor approved by the American Red Cross or the American Heart Association, or any other course approved by the board as equivalent.
4. Successful completion of a board-approved orthodontic assistant course, which may commence after the completion of six months of work experience as a dental assistant.
5. Passage of a written examination administered by the board after completion of all of the other requirements of this subdivision.

Dental Sedation Assistant Permit

1. Completion of at least 12 months of work experience as a dental assistant.
2. Successful completion of board-approved courses in the Dental Practice Act and infection control (8-hour), respectively.
3. Successful completion of a course in basic life support offered by an instructor approved by the American Red Cross or the American Heart Association, or any other course approved by the board as equivalent.
4. Successful completion of a board-approved dental sedation assistant course, which may commence after the completion of six months of work experience as a dental assistant.
5. Passage of a written examination administered by the board after completion of all of the other requirements of this subdivision.

Permit Renewal

A dental assistant who holds a specialty assistant permit must complete the same continuing education and license renewal requirements as are required for registered dental assistants in order to renew the permit.

Registered Dental Assistant

(Business & Professions Code §1752.1)

Submit written evidence to the Dental Board of either of the following eligibility requirements:

Graduation from an educational program in registered dental assisting approved by the board, and satisfactory performance on a written and practical examination administered by the board; or

1. Evidence of completion of satisfactory work experience of at least 15 months as a dental assistant in California or another state and satisfactory performance on a written and practical examination administered by the board.

"Satisfactory work experience" means performance of the duties of a dental assistant in a competent manner as determined by the employing dentist, who shall certify to such satisfactory work experience in the application.

The board shall give credit toward the work experience referred to in this section to persons who have graduated from a dental assisting program in a postsecondary institution approved by the Department of Education or in a secondary institution, regional occupational center, or regional occupational program, that are not, however, approved by the board. The credit shall equal the total weeks spent in classroom training and internship on a week-for-week basis. Graduates of programs not meeting established minimum criteria shall not qualify for satisfactory work experience as defined by this section.

Each applicant for RDA licensure on or after July 1, 2002, shall provide evidence of having successfully completed board-approved courses in radiation safety and coronal polishing as a condition of licensure. The length and content of the courses shall be governed by applicable board regulations.

In addition, individuals applying for RDA licensure shall demonstrate satisfactory performance on a written examination in law and ethics administered by the board and shall provide written evidence of successful completion within five years prior to application of all of the following:

- (1) A board-approved course in the Dental Practice Act.
- (2) A board-approved course in infection control (8-hour).
- (3) A course in basic life support offered by an instructor approved by the American Red Cross or the American Heart Association, or any other course approved by the board as equivalent.

RDA with Specialty Permits

An RDA may apply for an orthodontic assistant permit or a dental sedation assistant permit, or both, by submitting written evidence of the following:

1. Successful completion of a board-approved orthodontic assistant or dental sedation assistant course, as applicable.
2. Passage of a written examination administered by the board that shall encompass the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to competently perform the duties of the particular permit.

An RDA with permits in either orthodontic assisting or dental sedation assisting shall be referred to as an "RDA with orthodontic assistant permit," or "RDA with dental sedation assistant permit," as applicable.

RDA Renewal

Completion of the continuing education requirements established by the board pursuant to Section 1645 by a registered dental assistant who also holds a permit as an orthodontic assistant or dental sedation assistant shall fulfill the continuing education requirements for the specialty permit(s).

RDAs who first become licensed on and after January 1, 2010, shall provide evidence of successful completion of a board-approved course in the application of pit and fissure sealants prior to the first expiration of his or her license that requires the completion of continuing education as a condition of renewal. The license of a registered dental assistant who does not provide evidence of successful completion of that course shall not be renewed until evidence of course completion is provided.

Registered Dental Assistant in Extended Functions

(Business & Professions Code §1753)

Submit written evidence to the Dental Board of all of the following eligibility requirements:

1. Current licensure as a registered dental assistant or completion of the requirements for licensure as a registered dental assistant.
2. Successful completion of a board-approved course in the application of pit and fissure sealants.
3. Successful completion of either of the following:
 - (A) An extended functions postsecondary program approved by the board
 - (B) An extended functions postsecondary program approved by the board to teach the duties that registered dental assistants in extended functions were allowed to perform prior to January 1, 2010, and a course approved by the board in the procedures numbered (1), (2), (5), and (7) to (11), of the RDAEF duties listed above.
4. Passage of a written examination and a clinical or practical examination administered by the board. The board shall designate whether the written examination shall be administered by the board or by the board-approved extended functions program.

RDAEF with Specialty Permits

An RDAEF may apply for an orthodontic assistant permit or a dental sedation assistant permit, or both, by providing written evidence of the following:

1. Successful completion of a board-approved orthodontic assistant or dental sedation assistant course, as applicable.
2. Passage of a written examination administered by the board that shall encompass the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to competently perform the duties of the particular permit.

An RDAEF with permits in either orthodontic assisting or dental sedation assisting shall be referred to as an "RDAEF with orthodontic assistant permit," or "RDAEF with dental sedation assistant permit," as applicable.

Requirements for RDAEFs licensed before January 1, 2010, to perform new RDAEF duties

(Business & Professions Code §1753.4)

Each person who holds a current and active RDAEF license issued prior to January 1, 2010, who wishes to perform the duties specified in paragraphs (1), (2), (5), and (7) to (11), inclusive, of the RDAEF duties listed above, shall successfully complete an examination consisting of the procedures described below. The specific procedures shall be assigned by an RDAEF examination committee appointed by the board and shall be graded by examiners appointed by the board. Each applicant shall furnish the required materials necessary to complete the examination.

Successful completion of two of the following procedures on a simulated patient head mounted in appropriate position and accommodating an articulated typodont in an enclosed intraoral environment, or mounted on a dental chair in a dental operator:

- (1) Place, condense, and carve an amalgam restoration.
- (2) Place and contour a nonmetallic direct restoration.
- (3) Polish and contour an existing amalgam restoration.

RDAEF Renewal

Completion of the continuing education requirements established by the board pursuant to Section 1645 by a registered dental assistant in extended functions who also holds a permit as an orthodontic assistant or dental sedation assistant shall fulfill the continuing education requirement for such permit or permits.