California Dental Licensure Options

March 2022

Licensure by Clinical Exam

- Graduate from a dental school that is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC), or is currently approved by the Dental Board of California, or complete a two-year international dental program at a board-approved dental school.

- Take and pass the National Board Dental Examination.

- Take and pass the California Law and Ethics Examination.

- Take and pass the Western Regional Examining Board (WREB) Examination or the American Dental Examiners (ADEX) Examination. Patient-based and mannikin-based examination formats are accepted.

Licensure by Residency

- Graduate from a CODA-accredited or CDAC-accredited dental school.

- Complete one year of a CODA-accredited general practice residency or advanced programs in general dentistry. Applicants must have the residency program director complete the Certification of Clinical Residency Completion (Residency 1) form, found online at dbc.ca.gov.

- Take and pass the National Board Dental Examination.

- Take and pass the California Law and Ethics Examination.

- Not have failed the WREB Examination within the last five years of application.

- Some CODA-accredited residency programs not affiliated with a dental school, due to possible federal standards or their own policies, require residents to obtain a license either at the start of a residency program or during the program. This policy has been identified in VA programs and residency programs in other states. Therefore, it is critical that students ask this question before applying to a residency program.

Licensure by Portfolio

- Graduate from a California Dental Board-approved dental school.

- Take and pass the National Board Dental Examination. Take and pass the California Law and Ethics Examination.

- Take and pass the California Law and Ethics Examination.

- Complete the required competency examinations:

    - Comprehensive oral diagnosis and treatment planning

    - Periodontics

    - Direct restorations

    - Indirect restorations

    - Removable prosthodontics

    - Endodontics

- Effective 2014, the portfolio examination allows candidates enrolled in a board-approved dental school in California to build a portfolio of completed clinical experiences and clinical competency examinations in six subject areas over the normal course of clinical training. Both clinical experiences and clinical competency examinations are performed on patients of record within the normal course of treatment. The primary difference between clinical experiences and clinical competency examinations is that the clinical competency examinations are performed independently without faculty intervention.

Licensure by Credential

- Must possess current licensure from another state that is not revoked, suspended or restricted.

- Have proof that he or she has been in clinical practice, or has been a full-time faculty member, in the U.S. for a minimum of 5,000 hours in the last five of seven years prior to application; a maximum of two of the five years of this requirement can come from a residency program approved by the dental board.

- Not have failed the WREB or ADEX Examinations within the last five years of application.

- Have 50 units of continuing education credit within the last two years of application, including mandatory C.E. required by the dental board.

- Information from the applicant's disciplinary actions and from the National Practitioner Data Bank and the Drug Enforcement Administration are also considered by the dental board.

- If the 5,000-hour requirement has not been met, an applicant can still obtain a license if documentation of any of the following contracts is submitted to the board:

  - The applicant agrees to practice dentistry full time for two years in at least one primary care or hospital clinic (e.g., community clinics located in defined dental manpower shortage areas) as defined by the board; or

 - The applicant agrees to teach or practice dentistry full time in at least one dental education program approved by the board.