

CAREER INFORMATION

WHO IS THE REGISTERED DENTAL HYGIENIST?

The dental hygienist is a licensed health care professional who is a member of the health care team and who focuses on the prevention and treatment of oral diseases.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE “RDH” DESIGNATION?

The “RDH” means “Registered Dental Hygienist.” The RDH credential identifies a dental hygienist as a licensed oral health professional. State licensure requirements typically indicate that a dental hygienist must graduate from an accredited dental hygiene education program, successfully pass a national written examination and a state or regional clinical examination.

MUST A DENTAL HYGIENIST BE LICENSED?

Dental hygienists must be licensed. Licensure is state regulated and is the strongest form of regulation used today. A state license to practice dental hygiene assures the public and other professionals that you have completed a nationally accredited dental hygiene program and successfully passed a national written examination and a state or regional clinical examination. Examples of other licensed health care providers include dentists, physicians, nurses and physical therapists.

WHAT IS THE DENTAL HYGIENE SCOPE OF PRACTICE?

The dental hygienist is a licensed dental health professional who provides educational and therapeutic services and promotes total health through the maintenance of optimal oral health.

Each state has its own specific regulations and the range of services performed by dental hygienists varies from one state to another.

At Harper College, dental hygiene is a career program leading to an Associate in Applied Science Degree. Throughout the five-semester curriculum the dental hygiene student will provide care and treatment to help patients prevent oral diseases such as dental caries and periodontal disease. They also educate patients about maintenance of optimal oral health. The dental hygienist is especially knowledgeable about the preventive aspects of dental disease and the early recognition and treatment of periodontal disease.

As defined by the Illinois Dental Practice Act, upon graduation from an accredited dental hygiene program in the State of Illinois the graduate is competent to perform the following functions:

- Collect assessment data and review patient’s health profile
- Monitor patient’s vital signs, including blood pressure
- Examine the teeth and oral structures
- Examine and chart oral tissues
- Plan for dental hygiene treatment and control of disease
- Perform periodontal debridement (scaling and plaque removal)
- Apply caries preventive agents such as fluoride, varnishes, sealants and desensitizing agents
- Administer and monitor administration of nitrous oxide

- Administer local anesthesia
- Teach patients proper oral hygiene techniques to maintain health teeth and gums
- Counsel patients about plaque control and develop individualized at-home oral hygiene programs
- Provide dietary analysis education and counsel patients on the importance of good nutrition for maintaining optimal oral health
- Expose (or digitally capture), process and interpret dental radiographs
- Educate the individual patients, general public and special population groups about the importance of health promoting oral hygiene practices
- Conduct oral health screenings
- Design and implement community dental health programs
- Promote health and wellness programs
- Provide consumer education

WHAT EDUCATION IS REQUIRED FOR A DENTAL HYGIENIST?

Dental hygienists are graduates of accredited dental hygiene educational programs in colleges and universities and must take written and clinical licensing examinations before they are allowed to practice. Most dental hygienists work in private practice, but other opportunities exist to include employment as:

- Educators
- Administrators
- Business managers
- Researchers
- Consultants

WHAT ARE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DENTAL HYGIENIST?

A dental hygienist may work in such practice settings as:

- private dental offices and dental clinics in general dentistry and the specialties
- federal, state and local health departments or associated institutions
- hospitals and nursing homes
- school districts or departments of education
- educational programs for dental, dental hygiene and dental assisting students
- private business/industry
- correctional facilities
- private and public centers for pediatric, geriatric and other individuals/groups with special needs
- health maintenance organizations
- insurance companies
- dental equipment and supply companies

WHAT IS THE JOB OUTLOOK FOR DENTAL HYGIENISTS?

Refer to subsequent pages for information regarding employment and the job outlook for dental hygienists.

ILLINOIS DENTAL PRACTICE ACT

Joint Committee on Administrative Rules

ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

**TITLE 68: PROFESSIONS AND OCCUPATIONS
CHAPTER VII: DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION
SUBCHAPTER b: PROFESSIONS AND OCCUPATIONS
PART 1220 ILLINOIS DENTAL PRACTICE ACT
SECTION 1220.240 PRESCRIBED DUTIES OF DENTAL HYGIENISTS**

Section 1220.240 Prescribed Duties of Dental Hygienists

- a) Dental hygienists may perform the operative procedure of dental hygiene, consisting of oral prophylaxis procedures.
- b) Dental hygienists may perform dental health education functions and may record case histories and oral conditions observed.
- c) Dental hygienists may perform all procedures that may be performed by an appropriately trained dental assistant.
- d) Dental hygienists shall not perform those procedures that constitute the practice of dentistry as described in the Illinois Dental Practice Act. Hygienists may not perform procedures that require the professional judgment and skill of a dentist. Such prohibited procedures include, but shall not be limited to, the following:
 - 1) Making denture adjustments.
 - 2) Condensing or carving amalgam restorations.
 - 3) Placing and finishing composite restorations.
 - 4) Taking final impressions for the fabrication of prosthetic appliances, crowns, bridges, inlays, onlays or other restorative or replacement dentistry.
 - 5) Permanently cementing permanent crowns or bridges.
 - 6) Permanently re-cementing permanent crowns or bridges that have come loose.
- e) Dental hygienists may administer and monitor nitrous oxide under the following conditions:
 - 1) The dental hygienist functions under the supervision of the dentist who must

remain in the facility;

- 2) The dental hygienist may administer (start the flow of) nitrous oxide to the patient and control the induction of the gas, so that the patient is at a level of analgesia not anesthesia;
- 3) The dental hygienist may remove the patient from nitrous oxide when the hygiene procedures have been completed;

4) Proof of Completion

- A) The dental hygienist is responsible for obtaining proof of certification, validating completion of a 12 hour course relative to nitrous oxide analgesia and submitting certification to the dentist of valid completion of the required course. The course shall have been completed no earlier than December 31, 1994.
- B) A dental hygienist who completed the 12 hour course shall complete an additional 2 hour course in nitrous oxide analgesia administration. The course shall be completed by September 30, 2011. A dental hygienist who has not completed the 12 hour course shall complete an approved course of 14 hours relative to the administration and monitoring of nitrous oxide analgesia and submit certification of successful completion to the dentist. The course shall have been completed no earlier than January 1, 1998.
- C) An individual who graduated from an approved dental hygiene program after January 1, 1998 that contained nitrous oxide analgesia administration and monitoring in the curriculum shall not be required to complete the 14 hour course upon proof to the dentist of the required curriculum.
- D) A dental hygienist who has not completed the 12 or 14 hour course shall complete an approved 6 hour course relative to the administration and monitoring of nitrous oxide analgesia and submit certification of successful completion to the dentist.
- E) Proof of nitrous oxide analgesia education shall be made available to the Division upon request. The required hours shall include both didactic and clinical components and be given by a continuing education sponsor approved pursuant to Section 1220.440 or a dental hygiene program approved by the Division pursuant to Section 1220.250;

- 5) The dental hygienist must maintain Basic Life Support for Healthcare Providers certification or its equivalent, which will be in addition to the required courses. Certification or its equivalent shall be completed by September 30, 2011.

- f) Dental hygienists may assist in the provision of moderate sedation (conscious

sedation), deep sedation, and general anesthesia, as defined in Section 1220.500, under the following conditions:

- 1) The dental hygienist functions under the supervision of the dentist who must remain in the facility. When the hygienist is the treatment provider while the patient is under moderate sedation (conscious sedation), deep sedation, or general anesthesia, the anesthesia permit holder must remain in the treatment room;
 - 2) The dental hygienist is responsible for obtaining proof of certification validating completion of a course or courses totaling 12 hours or more. The course or courses shall include areas of anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, monitoring and emergency procedures with an emphasis on airway management. The required hours shall include both didactic and clinical components and be given by a continuing education sponsor approved pursuant to Section 1220.440 or a dental hygiene program approved by the Division pursuant to Section 1220.250;
 - 3) If the dental hygienist has complied with the provisions set forth in subsection (e)(4), the dental hygienist may complete an additional course or courses totaling 6 hours or more on advanced airway management and monitoring equipment in lieu of the 12 hour course required by subsection (f)(2). Proof shall be made available to the Division upon request;
 - 4) The dental hygienist must maintain Basic Life Support for Healthcare Providers certification or its equivalent, which will be in addition to the required courses. Certification or its equivalent shall be completed by September 30, 2011.
- g) Dental hygienists may administer local anesthetics under the following conditions:
- 1) The dental hygienist functions under the supervision of the dentist who remains in the facility.
 - 2) The dental hygienist is responsible for obtaining proof of certification, indicating successful completion of a 32 hour course that contains 24 hours of lecture and 8 hours of clinical training relative to the administration of local anesthetics and submitting certification to the dentist. An individual who graduated from an approved dental hygiene program after January 1, 1999 that contained administration of local anesthetics in the curriculum shall not be required to complete the 32 hour course upon proof to the dentist of the required curriculum. Proof of completion of education shall be made available to the Division upon request. The required hours shall include both didactic and clinical components and be given by a continuing education sponsor approved pursuant to Section 1220.440 or a dental or a dental hygiene program approved by the Division pursuant to Section 1220.250. The course shall contain at a minimum the following topics:
 - A) Patient preevaluation, which includes dental and medical health history (e.g., drug interactions/anxiety/pain and a physical evaluation);

- B) Pharmacology (e.g., drugs/types, vasoconstrictors, dosages, toxicity);
 - C) Recordkeeping;
 - D) Anatomy/Neuroanatomy/Physiology;
 - E) Armamentarium;
 - F) Techniques that include adjunctive use of topical anesthetics, mandibular block and infiltration;
 - G) Complications;
 - H) Post-operative instructions; and
 - D) Clinical experience that includes combining techniques for quadrant anesthesia and practical use of different techniques in all areas of oral cavity.
- 3) A dental hygienist who was licensed in another state and was authorized to administer local anesthesia in that jurisdiction will not be required to complete an additional course. Proof shall be submitted to the dentist and shall be made available to the Division upon request.
- h) The licensed dentist need not be present in the facility for a dental hygienist to perform the procedures set forth in this Section (except for the administration and monitoring of nitrous oxide, minimal sedation (anxiolysis), assisting in the provision of moderate sedation (conscious sedation), deep sedation, and general anesthesia, as defined in Section 1220.500, and the administration of injectable local anesthetics, which must be done under the direct supervision of a dentist as outlined in subsection (e)(1)) on persons who reside in a long-term care facility licensed by the State of Illinois or a mental health or developmental disability facility operated by the Department of Human Services hospital or other similar institution and are unable to travel to a dental office because of illness or infirmity. The dentist shall personally examine and diagnose the patient and determine which services are necessary to be performed, which shall be contained in a written order to the hygienist. The order must be implemented within 90 days after its issuance and an updated medical history and oral inspection must be performed by the hygienist immediately prior to beginning the procedures to ensure that the patient's health has not changed in any manner to warrant a re-examination by the dentist.
- i) All intraoral procedures performed by a dental auxiliary, except those provided for in subsections (b) and (h), must be examined by the supervising dentist prior to the dismissal of the patient from the facility that day.

1/2015

(Source: Amended at 34 Ill. Reg. 7205, effective May 5, 2010)