

Guiding Principles of an Empowered Workplace for Dental Assistants

Responsibilities of Employers

Fair Compensation and Benefits

Employers will provide dental assistants with a livable wage and benefits that reflect their expertise and contributions.

Standardized Training

Training will be comprehensive and standardized, ensuring dental assistants are fully qualified and capable to perform their duties competently and safely.

Equitable Access to Training and Development

Employers are responsible for ensuring dental assistants have access to professional growth opportunities, including dedicated time for professional development.

Safe Work Environment

A safe environment is essential, encompassing both infection control and protection from aggression or violence in the workplace.

Inclusivity, Respect, and Dignity

Employers will foster a workplace that is welcoming, supportive, and respectful of all individuals, regardless of background or identity.

Professional Scope of Practice

Employers will enable dental assistants to practice to the fullest extent of their professional scope per state regulations, without unnecessary barriers.

Autonomy in Professional Boundaries

Dental assistants will be empowered to assert their professional boundaries and say "that's not in my scope of practice" when necessary.

Clearly Defined Roles and Team Emphasis

Clear roles and responsibilities will be established, with an emphasis on teamwork and collaboration across all members of the dental practice.

Do No Harm

All members of the dental team will adhere to ethical standards, prioritizing patient well-being and safety.

Defined Reporting Mechanisms

There are clear channels for reporting concerns, ensuring that issues related to workplace safety or patient care can be addressed promptly and effectively.

Representation

Dental assistants shall have a voice in decisions that impact their profession, including appropriate representation on dental boards and committees.

These guiding principles were developed by the Dental Assistant Workforce Coalition and are part of the workplace toolkit. For more resources, visit: dalefoundation.org/courses/workplace-toolkit

Responsibilities of Dental Assistants

Support the Mission

Dental assistants are integral to supporting the dental team's mission, ensuring that quality care and positive patient experiences are delivered.

Understand State Regulations

Dental assistants will understand and adhere to state regulations and scope of work, performing all duties at the highest level of competency.

Care for Patients

Dental assistants will care for patients, ensuring their needs are met and that their treatment is delivered in a safe, respectful, and compassionate manner.

Professionalism

Acting with integrity and professionalism is essential, and dental assistants must uphold high ethical standards in all aspects of their work.

Productivity and Quality

Dental assistants are responsible for being productive, efficient, and ensuring that the work they produce meets the highest standards of quality.

Collaboration

Dental assistants will be reliable and responsible team members, contributing to the collective success and harmony of the workplace.

Empowerment and Professional Identity

Dental assistants view themselves as skilled professionals, saying "I am a dental assistant," rather than downplaying their role.

Commitment to Safety

Drawing from the principles of the Hippocratic Oath, dental assistants will report unsafe working conditions or practices to appropriate external entities when necessary.

Adoption of Technology and Digital Dentistry

Dental assistants will stay informed about emerging technologies and their impact on the profession, ensuring they remain adaptable and proactive in integrating new tools into their practice.

These guiding principles aim to create a balanced, respectful, and empowered workplace for dental assistants, where their rights are protected, their responsibilities are clearly defined, and they are supported in providing high-quality patient care.