



# Certified Press

Dental Assisting National Board, Inc.

Summer 2021 Digital Issue

## SALARY AND SATISFACTION

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## WORD FROM THE CHAIR



Michael Conte, D.M.D., M.P.H.  
DANB Board Chair

Before we introduce this summer issue, please allow me to share some very exciting news.

As Chair of the DANB Board of Directors, I'd like to highlight a recent accomplishment by DANB and DALE Foundation Executive Director Cynthia C. Durley, M.Ed., MBA.

Ms. Durley received the Organization for Safety, Asepsis and Prevention (OSAP) Special Recognition Award for Leadership during OSAP's 2021 Virtual Conference held June 2-5.

The OSAP Special Recognition Award for Leadership is bestowed at the discretion of the OSAP Board of Directors and recognizes individuals whose vision, works and achievements have significantly influenced and broadly shaped dental infection control.

Ms. Durley's contributions to dental infection control include co-founding the national Infection Control Consortium with former OSAP Executive Director Therese Long, MBA, CAE, and representatives from ADAA and ADEA, and leading the OSAP-DANB-DALE Foundation Dental Infection Control Education and Certification initiative with current OSAP Executive Director Michelle Lee, CPC. Congratulations, Cindy.

On to our cover story: The results of DANB's 2020-2021 Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey are now available — and once again, they look promising for DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) certificants. As reported in previous years, DANB certificants continue to report a higher salary (slightly more than \$2 more per hour compared to other dental assistants) and enjoy greater career satisfaction than those dental assistants who are not DANB certified.

Also this issue, we spotlight the many benefits of DANB certification and just a few of the 37,000-plus DANB certificants who enjoy them. For example, Jenifer Dymont-Gilbert, CDA, clinical director at OX Orthodontix in Maryland, recently celebrated her 25-year DANB certification milestone. She has enjoyed greater career mobility as a result. Read more on page 12.

Similarly, Lisa Johnson, CDA, Ed.D., credits DANB for helping her grow in her career. In fact, Dr. Johnson believes that holding DANB certification has helped her to earn the role of Vice President of Instruction/Chief Academic Officer at Alamance Community College in North Carolina. Read more on page 10.

There are countless personal and professional benefits to holding certification. Be proud of the incredible accomplishment that is earning and maintaining DANB credentials. I am proud of all the dental assistants who go above and beyond every day. Stay tuned to the fall issue for more stories of notable DANB certificants.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Conte". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

## DANB, DALE FOUNDATION WELCOME NEW CEO

Laura L. Skarnulis will assume the CEO role on August 16

On June 14, 2021, DANB and its official affiliate, the DALE Foundation, announced that Laura L. Skarnulis was named the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of both organizations. Ms. Skarnulis was hired by the DANB Board of Directors and the DALE Foundation Board of Trustees after an extensive nationwide search led by executive recruiting firm Kittleman & Associates.

Ms. Skarnulis will assume the role of CEO on Aug. 16, succeeding Cynthia C. Durley, M.Ed., MBA, who has been DANB's Executive Director since 1996, after serving as DANB's Director of Testing and Measurement since 1986, and the DALE Foundation's Executive Director since its inception in 2010. The CEO search began in 2019 after Ms. Durley announced that she would be transitioning away from the Executive Director position. After Aug. 31, Ms. Durley will serve in a consultative role.



Ms. Skarnulis comes to DANB and the DALE Foundation after serving for more than eight years as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), an organization that establishes the certification and continuing certification standards for its 24 Member Boards, certifying more than 920,000 physicians in one or more of the 40 specialties and 87 subspecialties offered.

As ABMS COO, Ms. Skarnulis was responsible for the oversight of the organization's information technology services and database management system, marketing and communications, finance and audit, as well as new product development and international programs.

Ms. Skarnulis also created ABMS's first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiative focused on addressing systemic biases driving inequities of healthcare delivery, while concurrently serving as the leader of the organization's pandemic response to COVID-19.

Prior to her tenure at ABMS, Ms. Skarnulis served as Chief Operating and Financial Officer for the United Way of Metropolitan Chicago. She joined United Way after more than nine years as the Chief Financial Officer and Senior Vice President of Finance and Administration for the Arena Football League and its affiliate af2.

Ms. Skarnulis received a Bachelor of Science in Accountancy from Northern Illinois University and became a Certified Public Accountant. She was named a 2019 Notable Woman in Healthcare by Crain's Chicago Business.

As Board leaders, we look forward to working with Ms. Skarnulis to oversee our strategic initiatives and position both organizations to continue to thrive during this exciting time in dentistry.

Sincerely,

Michael Conte, D.M.D., M.P.H., DANB Board Chair

Joanne Dawley, D.D.S., DALE Foundation Board President

## DANB CERTIFICATION BRINGS BENEFITS, SURVEY SAYS

DANB's Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey shows the advantages that holding DANB certification delivers

The results of DANB's 2020-2021 Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey are now available. As in past years, the results of the latest survey point to many benefits of holding DANB certification — including higher earnings and greater satisfaction among certificants.

Specifically, surveyed DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) certificants reported earning slightly more than \$2 more per hour compared to all dental assistants\*, most of whom are not certified.

### DANB CERTIFICANTS EARN MORE

DANB CDA certificants earn more than non-certified assistants:

- Median pay for CDA certificants:  
**\$22.09 per hour**
- Median pay for all dental assistants:  
**\$19.80\* per hour**

\*Figure from the 2020 Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Gerrie Keel, CDA, has enjoyed benefits as a result of holding DANB certification for more than a decade. She encourages her fellow dental assistants to become DANB certified, so that they can take their career and earnings to the next level. "I hope that more people become interested in the dental assisting field and seek education and certification to be more competitive and to better support themselves in a dental assisting career," Keel says.

Surveyed CDA certificants also reported high or very high job satisfaction (78%), compared with those who are not certified (72%). And they report feeling dedicated professionally: 84% of surveyed CDA cer-

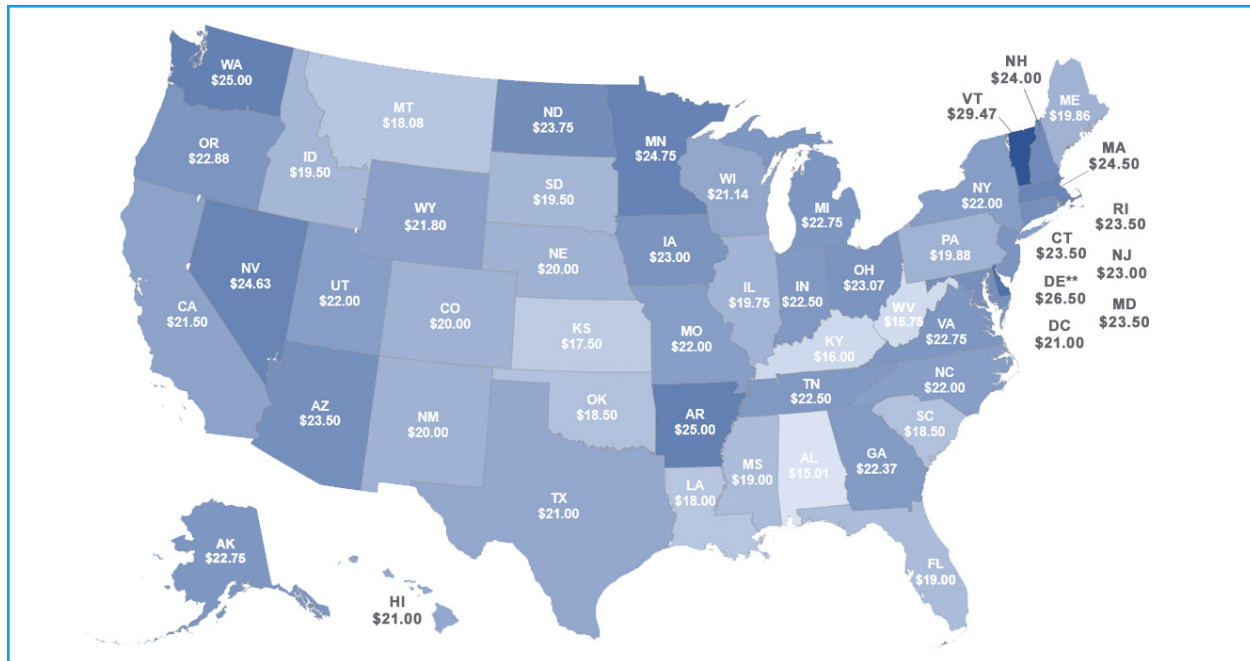
tificants agreed or strongly agreed that dental assisting is a career, not just a job.

This may be in part because DANB CDA certificants typically take on more responsibilities in the dental practice, such as performing expanded functions, ordering supplies, and performing office management duties.

Linda McGillicuddy, CDA, CPFDA, has experienced firsthand how maintaining DANB certification — CDA certification since 1996 and CPFDA certification since 2010 — has helped her perform more duties and help more people in the dental office.

\*Compared to figures from the 2020 Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# On the Cover



CDA certificants' median hourly wages by state

“When a properly trained, motivated dental assistant is delegated all the duties he or she is capable of legally doing, there is a tremendous sense of satisfaction,” McGillicuddy says. “Working hard and making a positive impact on the patient and the team are very rewarding.”

Along with increased pay and higher job satisfaction, the survey results also revealed numerous personal benefits to holding CDA certification, including pride, increased knowledge, greater confidence, and standing out when applying for a job.

“I was able to move all over the country when my husband was in the military and never had a hard time finding a dental assistant position,” says Kelli Jackson, CDA.

Certificants also say that holding DANB certification earns them more respect on the dental team. “The day that I became certified, everyone at the office was happy for me,” shares Gelacio Garcia, CDA. “I’m very happy to have chosen this profession; it has brought me happiness and satisfaction in my life.”

CDA certificants also reported receiving professional benefits, such as paid vacation, paid holidays and retirement plans.

These benefits could be why CDA certificants are committed not only to the profession, but also to maintaining DANB certification. In fact, 99% of those surveyed said they plan to renew their DANB certification, and 91% said they would encourage others to earn certification. Renewing DANB certification each year is the only way dental assistants can continue to use DANB certification marks such as CDA after their name.

## DANB CERTIFICANTS REPORT MORE BENEFITS

DANB CDA certificants report several benefits of holding certification, including:

- Pride
- Increased knowledge
- Standing out when applying for a job
- Higher pay
- Greater confidence

DANB CDA certificants are more likely than non-certified assistants to receive benefits, such as:

- Paid vacation
- Paid holidays
- 401(k)/pension plan
- Health insurance
- Paid sick leave
- Bonuses

Susan C. Lienberger, CDA, worked in dental assisting for nearly 40 years and values maintaining DANB certification. She encourages all dental assistants to earn certification. In fact, when asked what she hopes for the dental assisting profession in the future, Lienberger's answer is clear: that all dental assistants hold DANB certification. "I believe all assistants should be certified and should maintain current status as such," she says.

Through holding DANB certification, dental assistants can demonstrate their knowledge, experience and skill level to their colleagues and patients. "Some patients would call the office and ask to speak to me, as they were most comfortable with the knowledge I had and the genuine care I gave to them," Lienberger recalls.

Susan Riehn, COA, agrees that earning and maintaining DANB certification is a must — it's a sure sign of committing to lifelong learning, no matter what career stage a dental assistant is in. She's proud to have taken the step to become and stay certified, and she touts the importance of DANB certification to each and every dental assistant.

"You will have satisfaction knowing you have done all you can do — and you never stopped learning or pushing yourself to achieve more," Riehn believes.

### [Learn more online](#)

Learn more about the results of DANB's 2020-2021 Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey by visiting [www.danb.org](http://www.danb.org).

*DANB's 2020-2021 Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey was conducted from November to December 2020. The findings are based on a 15% response rate from a stratified random sample of 6,000 CDA certificants and an 8% response rate from a stratified random sample of 6,000 non-certified dental assistants.*



## DONATING TO AADOM'S 'SMILE' CAMPAIGN

Fundraiser to expand dental care access honors late AADOM member



Credit: dentalmanagers.com

DANB and its official affiliate, the DALE Foundation, made a contribution to the Everyone Deserves to Smile campaign through the Smiles for Life Foundation in honor of American Association of Dental Office Management (AADOM) member and Fellow Christine B., who passed away unexpectedly this year.

Smiles for Life was Christine's favorite charity, and AADOM partnered with Smiles for Life to establish the Everyone Deserves to Smile campaign in her honor.

"DANB and the DALE Foundation are proud to donate to this important cause in memory of Christine," says Cynthia C. Durley, M.Ed., MBA, Executive Director of both organizations.

Additionally, for each new member who joined AADOM before June 30 — the end date for the campaign — up to \$100\* was donated to fund special projects and help provide access to dental care for people with disabilities.

*\*For each new membership during the campaign, AADOM donated \$50, plus up to \$50 was donated through a matching program with AADOM partners CEDR HR Solutions, Henry Schein Dental, Lighthouse360 and Merchant Advocate.*

To learn more, visit <https://smilesforlife.org>.

## DENTAL ASSISTANTS WIN HOSA SCHOLARSHIP

Jayshonda Coleman and Angellina Hale, CDA, were named this year's winners

The international student organization HOSA-Future Health Professionals named approximately 75 scholarship recipients during its 2021 Virtual International Leadership Conference, held June 23-26.

Among the 2021 winners were aspiring dental professionals Jayshonda Coleman and Angellina Hale, CDA, selected to receive this year's HOSA scholarship for future oral healthcare professionals co-sponsored by DANB and its official affiliate, the DALE Foundation.

DANB and DALE Foundation Executive Director Cynthia C. Durley, M.Ed., MBA, expressed gratitude to HOSA for again partnering with DANB and the DALE Foundation, as well as for the opportunity to attend the virtual Scholarship Recipient and Donor Networking event held the evening of June 23.

Ms. Durley also congratulated Coleman and Hale: "These two young women are exemplary student leaders and deserving recipients of the 2021 HOSA Scholarships co-sponsored by DANB and the DALE Foundation."

### About the winners

The DANB/DALE Foundation HOSA Scholarship recipients were chosen based on criteria including grade-point average, HOSA activities and leadership, other school activities, honors in HOSA and other school activities, community service, professionalism, reference letters and a personal statement. They each won \$1,000, plus access to the OSAP-DALE Foundation Dental Infection Prevention and Control Certificate Program™.

**Jayshonda Coleman**, who recently graduated from Manatee Technical Institute in Florida, has been involved with HOSA-Future Health Professionals since November 2020. She earned recognition in the dental terminology category at HOSA's 2021 regional and state competitions, including first place in regional competition. Since January 2021, Coleman has worked as an intern with Greenberg Dental, where she's learning about helping to



"I have acquired great qualities such as ambition, proficiency and leadership through my experience with HOSA."

—Jayshonda Coleman

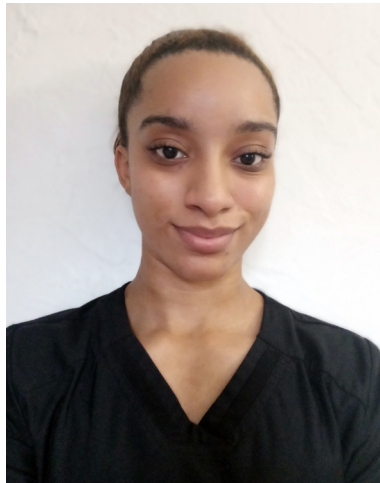


# News and Updates

provide patient care and assisting, among other duties. “I have learned great communication skills, teamwork, and how to carry myself professionally,” says Coleman, who aspires to have a career in general dentistry. She also has her sights set on earning DANB certification this year.

“I have acquired great qualities such as ambition, proficiency and leadership through my experience with HOSA,” Coleman says. “I plan to use these assets to further my education and eventually become a dentist. I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the HOSA organization because it aids in developing great qualities and character in future healthcare professionals. I now know that I can accomplish anything.”

**Angellina Hale, CDA**, graduated from Manatee Technical Institute in Florida as well as earned DANB CDA certification earlier this year. She has been involved with HOSA-Future Health Professionals since December 2020. She placed first in February 2021 at HOSA’s regional competition in the dental science testing category, and placed second in the state HOSA competition in March 2021 in the dental science category. Hale volunteers at a local dental office, helping the dentists and dental team prepare for providing patient care. She’s interested in pursuing a career in the dental field.



“I know DANB certification will benefit my future career goal of becoming a dentist.”

—Angellina Hale,  
CDA

“I know DANB certification will benefit my future career goal of becoming a dentist,” Hale says. “I was motivated to obtain DANB certification because I’m determined to succeed and build my career. Coming out of school, obtaining CDA certification from DANB already has helped with this goal.

“I am just now starting my journey to become a dentist by taking a small but beneficial step by becoming a dental assistant,” Hale continues. “Through holding DANB certification, as well as my HOSA involvement, I feel prepared for a future in the dental field.”

## More information about HOSA

The HOSA scholarship program contributes funds to outstanding high school graduates and postsecondary/collegiate HOSA members who achieve high scholastic standards, develop exceptional leadership skills, and commit to careers in the health professions. To learn more about HOSA, visit [www.hosa.org/about](http://www.hosa.org/about).

## EARNING THE DREAM EDUCATOR ROLE

Lisa Johnson, CDA, Ed.D., credits DANB for her career growth



As a leader in higher education, Lisa Johnson, CDA, Ed.D., of North Carolina strives to set an example for her dental assisting students by continuing to maintain DANB certification, which she's held since 2011.

In fact, Dr. Johnson credits DANB for helping her take her career to new heights.

"I started out as an office-trained dental assistant when I was 15 years old before enlisting in the U.S. Air Force, where I completed an associate of arts and sciences degree in dental assisting at Community College of the Air Force in 2001," Dr. Johnson shares.

Building this educational foundation was just the beginning.

Dr. Johnson went on to earn a Bachelor of Applied Science degree in dental hygiene from St. Petersburg College in Florida in 2008; a Master of Science in dental hygiene education

from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2011 (around the time she earned DANB certification); and in 2020, a Doctor of Education in higher education administration from Concordia University-Portland.

For Dr. Johnson, the importance of education — and DANB certification — to professional development and success is clear. "I'm proud to hold DANB certification, because this accomplishment definitely sets you apart as a professional who is a lifelong learner," she elaborates. "Without obtaining DANB CDA certification, and completing the continuing education required to maintain it, I would not be where I am in my career today."

Since working as a dental assistant in the clinical setting — which she sometimes now does in a volunteer capacity — Dr. Johnson has transitioned into working predominantly in higher education. Her career with Central Carolina Community College began in August 2008, in roles including a dental programs faculty member and chair of the college's Allied Health Sciences department. She then served as Dean of Health Sciences and Human Services at Central Carolina Community College from May 2014 through March 2021, when Dr. Johnson assumed the

# Spotlight on Excellence

role of Vice President of Instruction/Chief Academic Officer at Alamance Community College — a “dream come true,” she says.

“I was excited to join the amazing team at Alamance Community College, who do phenomenal work to support one another, so we can support and empower students to achieve their dreams and find success,” she shares.

Specifically, through her current role, Dr. Johnson works with students enrolled in a number of programs, including in the dental assisting program. This isn’t a responsibility that Dr. Johnson takes lightly.

In fact, as a DANB certificant, she makes it a point to highlight the importance of earning and maintaining certification among her dental assisting students.

“I want them to know the value of becoming DANB certified and what DANB has to offer,” Dr. Johnson elaborates. “A DANB certificant is able bring to their role the professional development and knowledge that’s necessary to improve their practice, and the care that patients receive in the practice.

“I love both working in a clinical setting and teaching, but teaching has allowed me to help influence the next generation of dental assistants and encourage them to prioritize holding DANB certification.

“I’m grateful for the role that DANB has played in helping me create my future, plus impact the future of other dental professionals,” Dr. Johnson adds. “I’m truly appreciative, and I hope to highlight for DANB CDA certificants everywhere that the sky is the limit when you hold DANB certification.”

## [Read more in this issue](#)

To further explore all the benefits of holding DANB certification, see the latest results of DANB’s Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey on page 4.

“Without obtaining DANB CDA certification, and completing the continuing education required to maintain it, I would not be where I am in my career today.”  
—Lisa Johnson, CDA, Ed.D.

## CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF DANB CERTIFICATION

Jenifer Dymment-Gilbert, CDA, reflects on the countless benefits DANB certification brings

Since earning DANB's CDA certification in 1994, Jenifer Dymment-Gilbert, CDA, has lived in four states and held several different jobs as a result of her cross-country moves. Relocating is never easy, but Dymment-Gilbert credits her DANB certification status for the success she's had with being able to stand out during the hiring process and land the role she was seeking.

"Holding national certification has made it more convenient to take jobs in different states," Dymment-Gilbert says. "DANB certification absolutely helped me get the job each time."

Today, Dymment-Gilbert is the clinical director at OX Orthodontix in Maryland, and she is proud to have recently celebrated her 25-year DANB certification milestone. "I was so thrilled to receive my 25-year certification recognition gift," Dymment-Gilbert says. "My employer was proud as well and publicly recognized me for my achievement. It was very special."



Beyond recognition, thanks to DANB certification, Dymment-Gilbert has felt better equipped to grow in her career and explore a variety of dental specialties, including periodontics, oral surgery and now orthodontics. She's been able to climb the career ladder, starting as a dental assistant early on in her career, to currently serving as the clinical director at the practice where she's worked for the past 10 years.

"DANB certification absolutely has helped me grow professionally," says Dymment-Gilbert.

As clinical director, one of Dymment-Gilbert's duties is to help fill open roles in the office. She has seen the hiring process from both sides, from the view of the applicant and of the hiring manager. And she understands how DANB certification can set a candidate apart.

"Being the one who interviews some of our applicants first, if I have to choose between hiring somebody who holds DANB certification and somebody who doesn't, even if they have the same experience level, I am much more inclined to go with somebody who holds DANB certifi-

# Spotlight on Excellence

cation,” Dymment-Gilbert says. “There are requirements to meet for maintaining DANB certification, and doing so shows a level of commitment to our field.”

*Read more from dental office managers regarding hiring and job searching starting on page 14.*

## Increased knowledge

For Dymment-Gilbert, to be certified by DANB also means to “have a general knowledge of everything” dental, since certificants must meet the continuing dental education (CDE) requirements needed for DANB certification renewal. By accomplishing this annually for the past 25 years, she has kept a finger on the pulse of the latest information in dentistry.

“I’ve been able to grow my knowledge in our industry through completing CDE as part of certification renewal,” says Dymment-Gilbert, who understands the importance of building on her educational foundation: She is a graduate of the dental assisting program at New Hampshire Technical Institute.

Dymment-Gilbert appreciates flexibility in CDE options and, along these lines, has found the DALE Foundation’s online options to be especially convenient to complete. “I’ve completed a few courses through the DALE Foundation, and I thought the experience was an easy one,” she says. “The courses are all online — so you really can click and go!”

## Higher pay and more respect

Dymment-Gilbert acknowledges countless additional benefits of holding DANB certification. First, she notes, “There’s definitely a difference in pay, when you’re holding certification versus not.”

Second, “There is a greater respect from the doctors when you hold certification, as opposed to not,” Dymment-Gilbert adds. “And there’s a level of respect that exists among the staff for those that have become certified.”

With this in mind, Dymment-Gilbert encourages those dental assistants who aren’t DANB certified to take the next step in their careers and go for it.

“Don’t just be qualified; be certified,” she recommends. “DANB certification is known nationwide.”

And to Dymment-Gilbert, holding DANB certification and enjoying the benefits it has brought to her career has meant the world.

## Read more in this issue

See the latest results of DANB’s Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey on page 4.

“Don’t just be qualified; be certified. DANB certification is known nationwide.”  
—Jenifer Dymment-Gilbert, CDA

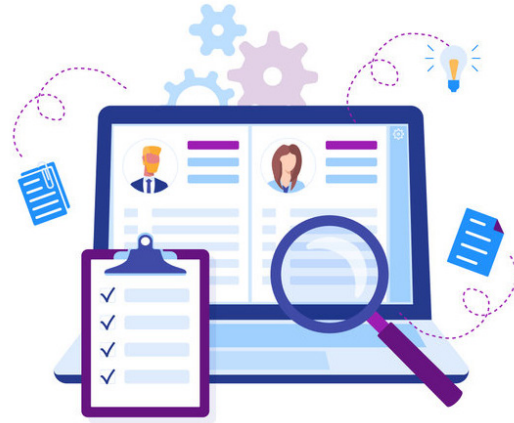


## HIRING MANAGERS' TIPS TO HIRE TOP DENTAL TALENT

Suggestions for success, from posting the job to making the offer

When dental team members resign, it can feel frustrating for dental office managers — since the task of filling the now-open position often falls to them.

Luckily, Beverly Wilburn, MAADOM, and Leslie A. Lytle, MAADOM — both office managers who hold Mastership in the American Association of Dental Office Management (AADOM) — have collective experience with doing just that. Here, they lend insight into recruiting, interviewing and hiring dental staff members, including dental assistants.



### Creating the job posting

Finding someone new can seem daunting — but preparation is the key to success. “One of the first tasks is to make sure you have a solid job description,” Lytle advises. Consider:

- What is the preferred education and experience level for the role?
- Are any exams, education or credentials required in your state?
- What tasks will the employee perform?

Be specific when it comes to tasks. “If a requirement would be presenting treatment plans to patients and getting them scheduled, make sure to include that,” Wilburn notes. “If being friendly and offering kind service meets the expectation for that office, add that.”

Also consider looking to those employees already on staff to weigh in. As Lytle shares: “We bring our assistants together to document daily duties, and to provide much-needed input.”

Lytle recommends including any available benefits, such as time off, health insurance, a retirement plan, the working hours (especially if flexible), continuing education support, and the pay range (especially if above average).

When it comes to salary, Wilburn recommends determining whether the pay for the position is competitive for your area. A good source of this information is the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, as well as DANB’s Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey (see page 4).

### Getting the word out

Once you’ve created the perfect job posting, it’s time to publish it. “Ultimately, where you post the position can be a big factor in whether you attract qualified individuals as intended,” Lytle acknowledges.

Whether you're posting the position to your dental practice website, to job-board sites such as Indeed.com, or to social media platforms like LinkedIn, be sure to pay attention to the details when publishing it, just as you'd expect job candidates to do when applying.

## Reviewing the applications

After a few weeks, applications likely will start rolling in — which can be exciting and a bit overwhelming for the office manager.

“Reviewing applications and resumes can be tedious,” Lytle says, “but if done correctly, you can weed out candidates who don't seem to be the right fit.” She recommends deciding on your deal-breakers. “For instance, if I notice that a candidate is a ‘job hopper,’ I tend to move that application to the bottom of the pile.”

Consider your must-haves as well. For Lytle, these include maintaining consistent employment, meeting the qualifications spelled out in the job posting, and holding current certifications.

## Interviewing before making the offer

After you've chosen the top candidates, it's time to interview them, whether that's over the phone, virtually via computer, or face-to-face.

Lytle typically prefers to meet the interviewee face-to-face. Wilburn agrees, adding that sometimes she'll even schedule small-group interviews to save time.

“Bringing applicants in to our practice provides them with the opportunity to see our facility, as well as get a sense for how the practice operates,” Lytle says.

During the interview, Lytle reviews the benefits, practice hours, mission statement and core values. “From there, my questions are tailored to get a feel for what motivates a candidate, as well as how the candidate might work with team members, and how they deal with difficult or challenging situations,” she adds.

Lytle also typically introduces the candidate to the team — a great way to assess their people skills, critical for working with potential colleagues and patients.

If the candidate excels during the first interview, it's likely they'll be asked back for a second or third before a job offer is made. “It is very rare that we offer a position to a candidate during the initial interview,” Lytle explains. “On occasion, I've even had them participate in a morning dental team huddle to help decide if they are a good fit.”

Wilburn acknowledges that even the strongest job candidates-turned-employees don't always stay at the practice for the long haul — and that's OK. There's something to be learned from every interviewee, every colleague, and every work experience. Plus, professional growth and movement is expected in the working world.

“Don't question your own past decisions when hired employees eventually leave the practice,” Wilburn ultimately advises. “We live, and we learn, and we hopefully get better with interviewing and hiring each and every time.”

## HOW TO STAND OUT IN A JOB SEARCH

Hold DANB certification, showcase your personality, and more advice from two hiring managers

As a dental assistant or prospective dental assistant, you may be job searching for a variety of reasons. You may be striving to land your first role in the profession, to find the right dental office, or to make a career change for other reasons. While the prospect of a new job can feel exciting, it admittedly can also seem a bit nerve-wrecking. Navigating the dental assistant job-application and interview process can be challenging — even for those who are especially qualified and bring their A-game to the interview.



Beverly Wilburn, MAADOM (left), and Leslie A. Lytle, MAADOM

To help ensure dental assistants have a smooth experience, stand out among other applicants, and ultimately receive the job offer, Beverly Wilburn, MAADOM, and Leslie A. Lytle, MAADOM, offer their advice. These hiring experts not only hold Mastership from the American Association of Dental Office Management (AADOM), but also have years of combined experience when it comes to finding new dental assistant applicants, hiring them, and helping them succeed in the dental office.

### **DANB: Where do you recommend job-seeking dental assistants look for job postings?**

**Lytle:** One of the first places that I post a dental assistant role is Indeed.com, as well as Facebook. As a hiring manager, utilizing social media allows for getting the word out quickly.

**Wilburn:** Dentalpost.net has a great new “matching” service to connect job candidates with ideal offices. Register with those types of sites and keep your resume active. Also, talk to people you trust in your network, and let them know you are looking. Consider calling offices that have great online reputations to let them know you are available. Don’t forget about establishing connections with members of the AADOM chapters in your area who may be able to help!

### **What helps a dental assistant job candidate stand out to hiring managers?**

**Lytle:** I am always looking to hire someone who has some experience and who already is

knowledgeable in what they do. Also, I consider an applicant's educational background; those who hold DANB certification stand out to me, for example. Finding a DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) certificant to hire in our area can be very tough, but worthwhile.

**Wilburn:** Showing your personality in your application is key. A resume can be very bland. In your application cover letter and during the interview, tell me about yourself and what you love about your work. Applicants stand out in the interview if they are well-spoken, demonstrate knowledge about their field, appear to be open to new experiences, and show they have done research about the office where they are interviewing.

## **What should a dental assistant look for when determining whether a role or practice would be the right fit for them?**

**Lytle:** Pay attention to the conversations you have with the practice/hiring manager and the other team members during the interview. Is the conversation smooth? Do you seem to share the same professional goals? Does the team seem to work well with the doctor, and is their work style similar to yours?

**Wilburn:** Also consider whether the interviewer was punctual, kind and genuinely interested in what you had to say. Ask lots of questions about the position and the culture of the office and take notice of the office environment. And most employers have some type of online employee-rating of them available on sites like Glassdoor.com. It is a good idea to check former employee reviews, plus the office's patient reviews online before accepting an offer.

## **How can a dental assistant be best prepared for a job interview?**

**Lytle:** Before the interview, make sure that you have researched and meet your state requirements and hold DANB certification(s), especially if required in the state in which you are applying. During the interview, be willing to explain what you can bring to the practice, as well as any knowledge that you may have or goals that you want to achieve. And prepare a list of questions you may have.

**Wilburn:** Be punctual. If the location is one you are unfamiliar with, do a "test run" the day before, so that you won't be late. Also do some research about the office and doctor.

## **What's your No. 1 piece of advice for dental assistant job seekers?**

**Lytle:** During the interview: Make sure to make eye contact with the interviewer, and make sure to have references available. Overall: Be willing to go with the flow. You may be coming from another office where things were completed a certain way, but keep in mind that a new office will have their own protocols.

**Wilburn:** Be willing to give the job a try if it feels like it may be the right fit. Pay, benefits and hours all can be negotiated, but working in an unhappy environment can't be easily changed.

## **What's your No. 1 piece of advice for dental assistant job seekers for what NOT to do?**

**Lytle:** Make sure to silence your phone or, better yet, put your phone away. There is no reason to have it out unless you are scheduling a second part of an interview.

**Wilburn:** Don't have a "me-only" attitude. Good-quality, long-term, mutually beneficial employer/employee relationships start with a "we" approach.

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