

CERTIFICATION PAYS OFF

CDAs report higher wages and satisfaction, survey says p. 7

EDUCATOR SPOTLIGHT

Preparing students for SkillsUSA competitions is highly rewarding for Beth Ladd p. 10

DENTAL DREAMS

Liz Koch scholarship recipients share their professional development plans p. 3



Word from the Chair

I'm pleased to continue serving on the DANB Board of Directors as Chair for the 2022-2023 year, to work alongside my fellow Directors and with DANB and DALE Foundation staff to positively impact the dental assisting profession. I'm honored to serve another year, as I believe our collective efforts are needed now more than ever.

DANB and the DALE Foundation are mindful of what's happening in the dental community, and we have been considering how other organizations are approaching oral healthcare issues — including significant dental workforce shortages. DANB has taken several steps to address these important topics.

In September, DANB [published outcomes](#) from the Dental Assistant Stakeholder Forum on the Future Workforce, held in July. The event, hosted by DANB and the DALE Foundation, convened leaders in dentistry, oral health, and healthcare to brainstorm ways to meet future dental team and workforce needs, including recruitment.

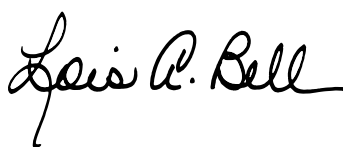
In October, DANB collaborated with the American Dental Association Health Policy Institute, American Dental Hygienists' Association, American Dental Assistants Association, and igniteDA to publish new research on the dental workforce shortage. According to [the report](#), *Dental Workforce Shortages: Data to Navigate Today's Labor Market*, factors associated with retention include work-life balance and positive workplace culture.

And this month, DANB published its latest Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey. Conducted every two years, the survey strives to capture the current salary and workplace benefits of U.S. dental assistants, as well as understand the factors that affect dental assistant job satisfaction.

The latest findings show the many benefits of holding DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) certification, including higher pay. This year, nearly two-thirds (65%) of dental assistants overall reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with their job. Those dental assistants holding more than one DANB certification reported the highest satisfaction. In addition, DANB CDA certificants are more likely to view dental assisting as a career and feel valued by their employer.

I know DANB certification moves dental assistants' careers forward. I know the dedication that earning and maintaining certification takes. Truly, I understand the value of dental assistants — and especially those who hold DANB certification. It's a privilege to continue supporting all of you.

Sincerely,
Lois Bell, CDA, CPFDA, CRFDA, CDIPC, MADAA



DANB Board Chair



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2022 scholarship recipients share dental dreams

The 2022 Liz Koch Memorial Scholarship award is accelerating five dental assistants' careers.

The Liz Koch Memorial Scholarship supports the career advancement of dental professionals. This year, the DALE Foundation Scholarship Committee has named five recipients: Ashley Blake, CDA; Rachelle Keyonnie, CDA; Stacey Kruger, CDA, CDIPC, DISIPC; Kayla Marks, CDA; and Charlene Thomas, CDA, EFDA.

These outstanding dental assistants stood out from more than 90 applicants from across the country. Here, they discuss their scholarship award plans, career goals, and more.

Celebrating earning CDA certification

Ashley Blake, CDA, of Littleton, Maine, used her scholarship award toward the cost of the DANB General Chairside Assisting (GC) exam in order to earn DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) certification. "Since I've applied for the scholarship, I've tested and passed, earning my CDA certification!" Blake shares.

Blake's journey toward earning her certification began more than a decade ago, when she spent time in high school job shadowing her aunt, a DANB CDA.

"During that time, I fell in love with the dental field," Blake elaborates. "So I enrolled in school as a dental hygiene student. But my first year in college, I realized I didn't feel the excitement for dental hygiene like I had felt while job shadowing in dental assisting. Hygiene no longer felt like the right career path for me, so I switched."

Now, Blake reports she has been happily working as a dental assistant at a private dental practice in Houlton, Maine, for more than three years. She has no doubt that DANB certification will benefit her career in the long term. "Holding DANB certification gives me the drive I need to keep going, to earn more certifications," Blake believes.



Striving to make a public health impact

Rachelle Keyonnie, CDA, of Winslow, Arizona, is using her scholarship to help fund tuition at Northland Pioneer College, where she is working toward an associate degree and then plans to continue to study public health.

"This goal is important to me because of my family and my daughter," Keyonnie says. "I want to make my family proud while doing something I love, and I want my daughter to know that she can do and be whatever she wants to be. Plus, there are very few Native American providers, and I want to change that, just a little bit."

Keyonnie has already achieved so much in her short dental assisting career. She's been a dental assistant at Winslow Indian Health Care Center for more than five years, has completed expanded functions training through Indian Health Services, and has held DANB CDA certification since 2019. Next, she has her sights set on earning Certified Preventive Functions Dental Assistant (CPFDA) and Certified Restorative Functions Dental Assistant (CRFDA) certifications.

"Since I started working in dental, my mother — a CDA certificant through DANB for 49 years — told me that I should get my certification. DANB certification has many benefits, one of them being that I learn all the time."



Rachelle Keyonnie

Elevating infection control expertise

Stacey Kruger, CDA, CDIPC, DISIPC, of Wabasha, Minnesota, used her scholarship award to earn Dental Industry Specialist in Infection Prevention and Control (DISIPC) certification in August 2022. This achievement comes after Kruger also earned Certified in Dental Infection Prevention and Control (CDIPC) certification in May.



Stacey Kruger

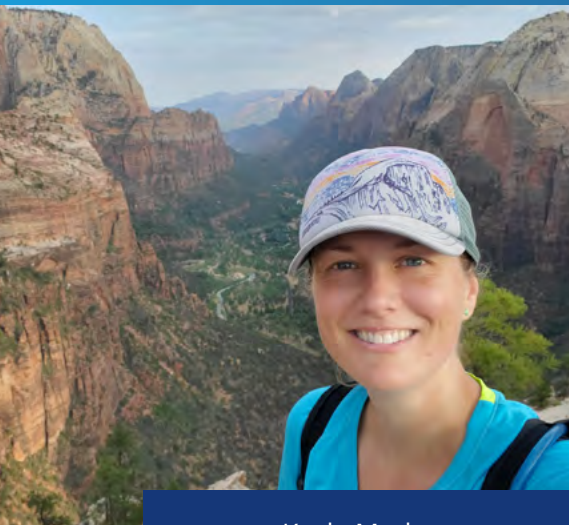
"I chose to obtain [DISIPC certification](#) as well as [CDIPC certification](#) because I feel that holding them both shows my patients and co-workers that I care about safety," explains Kruger, lead dental assistant at Wabasha Dentistry. "I now have more knowledge and a better understanding of infection control and prevention, to be able to give my patients and co-workers the safest possible work environment."

Kruger has been in the dental field for more than five years, previously serving as dental assistant, lead assistant, and infection control officer. She graduated from Rochester Community and Technical College in spring 2018 and shortly after earned DANB CDA certification.

Going forward, Kruger intends to continue prioritizing professional development and maintaining DANB certification. "All my DANB certifications have elevated my confidence in my work and heightened my knowledge base when it comes to assisting, infection control, and office leadership."

Standing out as a leader in dental education

Kayla Marks, CDA, a dental assistant instructor at Blackhawk Technical College in Janesville, Wisconsin, used her scholarship award to earn a certificate in career and technical education leadership from the University of Wisconsin (UW)-Stout.



Kayla Marks

"The Liz Koch Memorial Scholarship has helped me immensely in reaching my goal of completing my leadership certificate curriculum, to help me become a better educator," explains Marks. She has spent more than 20 years in the dental field as both a dental assistant and dental hygienist, transitioning to dental education in 2020.

Marks is an advocate for education, currently serving on the Blackhawk Technical College Dental Advisory Board, holding an associate degree in dental hygiene from Madison Area Technical College, and having earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish and sociology from UW-La Crosse.

"In moving from working in the clinical setting to teaching, it is important to me to continue my training to learn more about education," Marks adds. "I want to be able to effectively translate my many years of clinical practice to the next generation of clinicians."

Learning more about infection control

Charlene Thomas, CDA, EFDA, of Boise, Idaho, planned to use her award toward attending the 2022 National Network for Oral Health Access (NNOHA) Annual Conference, from Nov. 6-9, 2022, in Nashville, Tennessee.

"NNOHA is an organization with an annual conference that provides representation, continuing education, and support for federally qualified healthcare centers (FQHC)," says Thomas, who has been working in dental assisting for more than 20 years.

She joined Terry Reilly Health Services, an FQHC, in 2015, now serving as Dental Assistant Supervisor there. "Attending the NNOHA conference is an amazing time to meet peers from across the country. You get to learn about what other FQHCs are doing, Occupational Safety and Health Administration-related updates, infection control processes, and more."

"It is a privilege to gather with everyone, to share and learn from each other," Thomas adds. "Receiving this scholarship to help offset the registration cost is amazing and makes attending the conference achievable for me."

Also using her scholarship award, Thomas plans to earn CDIPC certification. "Infection control is of great interest to me. I take patient safety and infection control to heart because our patients trust us each time they come for an appointment. With increased infection control knowledge, our team can better protect each other and our patients, and go home safely to our families at the end of the day."

"To me, infection control is so much more than just ensuring safety in the operatory," Thomas adds. "It ripples outward to protect our entire community."



Charlene Thomas

About the scholarship

Liz Koch, late Chief Operating Officer of DANB and the DALE Foundation, was a strong believer in continuing education, lifelong learning, and the potential of dental professionals. After Koch's untimely passing in 2011, the Liz Koch Memorial Scholarship was established in 2014 in her memory. To date, more than 30 scholarship winners have been named in Koch's honor.

To learn more, visit www.dalefoundation.org/resources/scholarship.

Scholarship fuels career goals

Previous Liz Koch Memorial Scholarship recipients share how the award advanced their careers.

In August, the DALE Foundation announced the winners of the 2022 Liz Koch Memorial Scholarship. This is the scholarship's ninth year, and its impact is still realized by even early recipients.

Robynn Rixse, CDA, CDIPC, MADAA, FAADOM, EFDA, B.S., used her 2018 scholarship funds to fuel her career-long commitment to education. Specifically, Rixse says the scholarship helped her graduate summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in healthcare administration from Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania in 2019.

"The day that I got that bachelor's degree and walked across that stage was probably one of the most proud moments of my life," shares Rixse. "The fact that the scholarship allowed me to achieve something that I had wanted for 40 years was not only professionally a blessing, but personally one as well. And I got to show my children not to give up."

Rixse has been in the dental field for more than three decades, wearing many different hats. She was a dental rover and sterilization tech, a chairside assistant, and a dental clinic administrator at a homeless shelter before moving into administrative roles for the past 20 years.



"Having that education and having those credentials as a backing, especially as I wanted to grow administratively, was crucial," explains Rixse. "I would look into different positions that I was interested in, and not having that backing of a bachelor's degree was really going to slow my progress. And so the scholarship was a huge asset as I wanted to continue to grow."

Since earning the scholarship and her bachelor's degree, Rixse has also joined the American Association of Dental Office Management (AADOM), become an AADOM Fellow, and joined DANB's Board of Directors.

Gina Conrad, CDA, RDA, MADAA, FADAA, B.S., also pursued education with funds from the Liz Koch Memorial Scholarship, which she earned in 2019. She recalls being "very excited" when she learned she had won the award. "I was at work, getting ready to take my lunch break, and I happened to see the news come through on my phone and I obviously said 'woo-hoo!'" shares Conrad. "It helped relieve some of the burden of coming up with that money."



Conrad graduated from Rutgers School of Public Health with a bachelor's degree in human resource management and education in 2020.

Although she isn't currently working as a dental assistant, Conrad maintains her certification and hopes to become a dental assisting instructor. For now, she's fulfilling her teaching ambitions in other ways: by training other parents to be volunteers for the Boy Scouts of America and by educating people on insurance benefits in her current position at Delta Dental. "I'm always teaching someone something," says Conrad.

As both Conrad and Rixse have tackled different challenges throughout their careers, their commitment to ongoing learning and growth have remained consistent.

"There is so much that we don't know. We may think that we've reached the peak of whatever position we happen to be in, and then we realize just how much more there is that we can learn about it," says Rixse. "It just makes us better at what we do, and it makes us better at serving the people in our care."

CDAs report higher satisfaction and career commitment

DANB's latest survey shows the personal and professional advantages of certification.



Dental assistant salaries are on the rise, according to the DANB 2022 Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey. Since 2004, DANB has conducted the survey biennially, highlighting current data and trends to help inform career and workforce decisions, while looking toward the future of dental assisting.

In 2022, Certified Dental Assistants reported earning about \$4 per hour more than dental assistants who are not certified. Certified Dental Assistants with additional DANB certifications had the highest salary potential, earning \$6 per hour more than those who are not certified — a 30% increase.

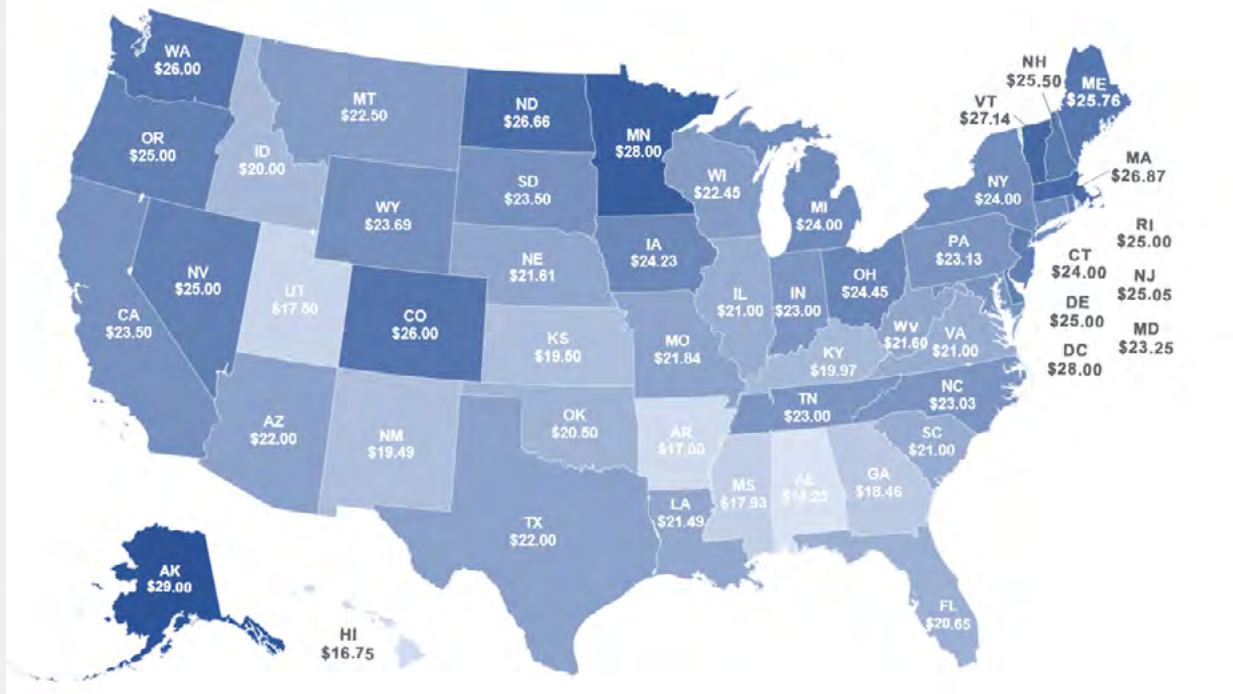
A variety of factors can impact dental assistant wages, including location, years of experience and education. For instance, dental assistants who work in urban settings tend to earn more than those in less populated areas. Certification can also play a role: Samantha Scott, CDA, of Washington says that being a Certified Dental Assistant has improved her salary potential.

"During my review earlier this year, my boss asked me why I should receive a raise," says Scott. "I listed my CDA certification as one of the reasons, and guess what? I got a 15% raise."

In addition to higher wages, over half of the dental assistants surveyed received a raise in the past 12 months, with an average pay increase of \$1-2 an hour. Compensation is an important aspect of any career, and this is also true for a career in dental assisting — dental assistants reported higher job satisfaction with increased wages. Certified Dental Assistants were most likely to receive a raise and reported higher satisfaction compared to non-certified assistants.

Throughout Susan Christensen's three decades as a Certified Dental Assistant, she enjoyed both personal and financial achievements. "I have realized I didn't just find a job to fill my time, but I found a really

CDA Earnings Per Hour



satisfying career," she says. "I feel valued and appreciated, and my dental assisting salary has served my financial needs through all that life has thrown at me."

Certification offers benefits

The survey results also show that DANB certification continues to offer competitive advantages in a changing professional landscape. According to the 2022 survey results, Certified Dental Assistants reported higher wages and increased satisfaction, and they were more likely to view dental assisting as a career and feel valued by their employer.

In addition to professional advantages, CDAs reported that certification offered personal benefits such as pride, self-improvement and greater confidence. An overwhelming majority (98%) of Certified Dental Assistants surveyed plan to renew their certification.

Dental assistants such as Scott know the positive impact CDAs can have on dental offices. "Certified Dental Assistants value all aspects of their career, they are hungry to grow and learn, and they're not afraid to work hard," she says.

The CDA Advantage



Certified Dental Assistants reported higher satisfaction than dental assistants who are not certified, and they were more likely to view dental assisting as a career and feel valued by their employer.

Dental Assisting as a Career

78% 3 out of 4 agree or strongly agree that dental assisting is a career, not a job.

54% More than half agree or strongly agree they feel valued by their employer.

31% Nearly 1 in 3 often think about leaving their employer.

Career satisfaction is high, but declining

Nearly two-thirds of dental assistants said they were satisfied or very satisfied, especially among CDAs and CDAs with multiple certifications. While job satisfaction remains high, this number has declined since 2016. Reasons for happiness at work can vary, but the top job factors for dental assistants surveyed included salary, work/life balance and feeling like part of a team. If dental assistants' needs aren't being met, they might seek employment elsewhere: nearly one in five reported changing jobs in the last year, particularly those who are not certified.

Diane Grondin, CDA-Emeritus, is now retired, but she struggled with job satisfaction when she started her dental assisting career in Massachusetts. Finding the right dental practice and taking advantage of education and certification opportunities made a difference. "I've noticed that some dental assistants have a hard time getting started in the profession, and I can relate — the start of my career was challenging, too," she says. "But then I found a great doctor who was supportive, and we worked well together. Sometimes it can be a tough field to get into, but if you keep at it, earn and maintain DANB certification, and continue your education, you will find the right fit."

"Sometimes it can be a tough field to get into, but if you keep at it, earn and maintain DANB certification, and continue your education, you will find the right fit." — Diane Grondin

For more career insights, download the full [2022 Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey](#) report.

About the survey

DANB's 2022 Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey was conducted between July and August 2022. The findings are based on a 7% total response rate from survey invitations sent to more than 58,000 dental assistants.

Educator shares SkillsUSA dental assisting experiences

Preparing dental assisting students for SkillsUSA competitions and seeing them succeed is highly rewarding for educators.

For many students, from middle school through college, technical education is an invaluable step in their ultimate career path. With chapters across the country, SkillsUSA is a nonprofit organization that seeks to help students — including those enrolled in dental assisting programs — further prepare for entering the workforce by developing their skills in classroom and workplace settings.

Competitions are among the valuable opportunities SkillsUSA provides students. Competitions held at the local, state, and national levels allow students to show off the skills they've worked hard to develop in the classroom.

Dental assisting students compete in a variety of events, including chairside assisting; preparation of dental materials; infection control; and emergency, laboratory, and office procedures. Competitions are judged based on students' demonstrated competency in a variety of skills critical to their area of study. For dental assisting, that includes administrative, clinical, and laboratorial skills.

"Simply put, it is all about opportunity and opening doors for students, and that is what SkillsUSA offers," says Beth Ladd, CDA, EFDA, B.A., a dental assisting instructor at the Center for Technology, Essex.

Ladd, who has taught at the Essex Junction, Vermont, school for over 20 years, has sent students to compete in SkillsUSA competitions since 2003.

"We were hooked on competing at the national level when we took our first student to the competition in Kansas City, Missouri, in 2003 and we placed third in the dental assisting competition and won a bronze medal," says Ladd.

But getting to those national competitions requires a lot of hard work for Ladd and her students. It starts with the state competition in Vermont, held each spring.

"Dental assisting students who achieve high marks on their practical midterm exam in our program are given the opportunity to compete in the Vermont SkillsUSA dental assisting competition. We practice, practice, and practice the competition skills in our clinic to prepare," explains Ladd.



Beth Ladd

She adds: "It is obvious that the students who take the competition seriously and are personally invested in preparing rise to the top as serious contenders at the state-level competition."

State contest winners at both the high school and college levels qualify for the SkillsUSA Championships, a national competition held in June each year. In 2022, over 5,000 students qualified to compete in 108 events. In the dental assisting category, one of Ladd's high school students not only qualified for the SkillsUSA Championships but also earned a bronze medal in the competition.

"It is the best feeling in the world to witness the look on your student's face when they medal at the SkillsUSA national competition, and the student has the opportunity to go up on stage, in front of thousands of people, to receive their medal," shares Ladd. "It is difficult to put into words, but it is amazing."

While it's rewarding to watch her students become SkillsUSA medalists, it's not what drives Ladd's passion for teaching.

"Success isn't always defined as achieving great things, but just doing what you love," she says.

Finding this passion often helps Ladd's students succeed in the classroom when they've previously struggled.

"For many high school students, this is the first time they have seen success academically because they are engaged in an area of high interest and are learning something they have a passion for," explains Ladd.

She adds: "There are so many success stories, and that is why I continue educating."



Chris Ianni, dental assisting instructor at the Center for Technology, Essex, poses with a student taking impressions.

IUPUI educates future dental assistants with a unique approach

Dental assisting students at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis get a collaborative, robust education in partnership with dental school.



IUPUI dental assisting students perform a practice procedure.

There are nearly 250 dental assisting programs in the country accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). How does the program at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) stand out from the crowd? It's fully housed within the Indiana University School of Dentistry in Indianapolis.

That gives IUPUI dental assisting students the opportunity for a more well-rounded education and valuable experience as they move forward in their careers.

Many dental assisting programs partner with a private practice for clinical rotations. IUPUI students, on the other hand, get the opportunity to work with the variety of specialty clinics within the dental school, including orthodontics, endodontics, pediatric dentistry, and periodontology. Not only do students get to learn more about these specialties, but they also get hands-on experience working in each one.

"Students at other programs still get a great clinical experience, but our students just get to work with so many different providers in all of the recognized specialty clinics," explains Michelle Priest, CDA, EFDA, M.B.A., who attended the program as a student, has worked there since 2007, and is now the school's director of dental assisting.

"They don't get just one specialty experience like most of the other CODA programs," elaborates Priest. "They get all of the dental specialties to round out their clinical environment."

To receive their dental assisting certificate, students must complete two semesters and 30 credit hours. This includes approximately 1,000 hours of lectures, labs, and clinical experience. At the end of the semester, students take DANB's [CDA exam](#), which includes the General Chairside Assisting (GC), Infection Control (ICE), and Radiation Health and Safety (RHS) component exams.

"Students come into this program not knowing a mirror from an explorer or an incisor from a molar, and they leave here knowing how to take radiographs, coronal polishing, and fluoride — they're expanded functions. The growth in a year is just phenomenal," says Sheri Alderson, CDA, EDA, B.S., a clinical instructor with the IU dental school since 2001.

Upon completing the program and earning the dental assisting certificate, students have numerous options. Many students choose to begin their careers and start working as a dental assistant right away. Some students go on to enroll in IU's dental hygiene or dentistry school, which is becoming more popular, says Alderson. The dental school currently has three former dental assisting students enrolled in the D.D.S. program and one who recently graduated.

"It's certainly no guarantee to get accepted into hygiene or the D.D.S. program, but we feel that [the dental assisting program] gives them a foot in the door," explains Alderson. "They get to know people, they make contacts, and they also learn if they like dentistry."

Many dental assisting students end up working for the dental school down the line, either on a full-time or temporary basis while still in school. "They really love getting our students as employees," says Alderson.

"We have former students working in all aspects of dentistry, whether it's dental assisting, whether it's moving on to the pre-doctoral program or becoming a dentist or an educator or a salesperson," adds Priest.

Dental assisting students don't necessarily have to stay in dentistry, either.

Some opt to continue their education at IUPUI after receiving their dental assisting certificate. Six other majors at IUPUI accept dental assisting credit hours, including public health and organizational leadership. "We feel like that's a big draw," says Alderson.

At the end of the day, Alderson and Priest are proud to play a role in their students' development, no matter the career path they ultimately follow.

"We've had people who had lifelong careers as dental assistants and some who have gone on to other things. One was a lawyer," shares Alderson. "It's always fun to think that maybe you had some input in their development and their career from the beginning."



Michelle Priest, director of dental assisting at the Indiana University School of Dentistry, oversees students performing a practice procedure.

Celebrating new Certified Orthodontic Assistants

Shining a spotlight on those who've recently earned DANB COA certification.

One draw of dental assisting is the ability to explore different pathways within dentistry. Orthodontics is one of the most popular specialties within dental assisting, and earning DANB's Certified Orthodontic Assistant (COA) certification is a milestone achievement for many.

Heather Sherbine, CDA, COA, EFDA, recently found out she joined a group of over 1,000 assistants who've earned the certification. Not only is she proud of the accomplishment, but so are the doctors at her practice.

"My doctors are super excited that they have an assistant who has [COA certification]. Not very many people have it because it's not required in the state of Pennsylvania," explains Sherbine.

Although the certification isn't required in her state, Sherbine was driven to enhance her knowledge in orthodontics, a specialty she transitioned to just before the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020.

"It just felt good for me to be able to take the knowledge that I've been getting for the last two years and apply it toward something," says Sherbine.

Certification is not only beneficial for orthodontic assistants to improve their credentials — it can also help them provide better care to patients. COA certificants are well-equipped to assist orthodontists during appointments, explain treatments, answer questions, and help patients understand the importance of orthodontic care.

"A lot of people think that orthodontics is just straightening of your teeth, but it can fix your bite," explains Sherbine. "And people don't realize how you need a good bite to do everyday things as simple as eating. So orthodontics is a lot more than straightening your teeth just to look nice."

Learning a new specialty can be difficult enough, but Sherbine's practice also dealt with shutdowns and staff members leaving due to the pandemic. Drawing inspiration from her young daughter, Sherbine stuck with it and pursued COA certification when she reached two years of experience. When she finally earned the certification earlier this year, she was ecstatic.

"I knew I wanted it when I started in orthodontics," shares Sherbine. "I was really proud of myself for doing all that because when I started school for certified dental assisting, I had my orientation on my daughter's first birthday. She was really my motivation."



"I knew I wanted [COA certification] when I started in orthodontics.

I was really proud of myself."

— Heather Sherbine, CDA, COA, EFDA

She adds: "I think that if you take the time to learn something new, you should be able to reward yourself with certification."

Kayla Cosimini-Osorio, CDA, COA, also earned her COA certification recently. She works as a dental assistant in the U.S. Air Force, where she was selected to work in orthodontics and fell in love with the specialty. "I like making people feel better about their smiles," she says.

"Not many in the Air Force have their CDA. There's probably less than 1% who have two different certifications. So, this will definitely help me promote myself in the future."

— Kayla Cosimini-Osorio, CDA, COA



Cosimini-Osorio originally planned to take her COA exams in 2021 to help her stand out among dental assistants in the Air Force and further her career.

"Not many in the Air Force have their CDA. There's probably less than 1% who have two different certifications," estimates Cosimini-Osorio. "So, this will definitely help me promote myself in the future."

A car accident delayed Cosimini-Osorio's plans to take the COA exams. When she finally earned her certification this year, it was extra satisfying.

"It makes me extremely proud that I was able to accomplish that,"

says Cosimini-Osorio, who also wants to pursue infection control certification down the line.

How to get started

Earning the COA certification requires passing DANB's [Infection Control](#) (ICE) and [Orthodontic Assisting](#) (OA) exams. The ICE exam does not have eligibility requirements, and candidates must meet the requirements in one of four pathways to take the OA exam.

To learn more about the certification and view the eligibility requirements, visit www.danb.org/exams/exam/coa-exam.

AADOM members honored at annual conference

DALE Foundation President Guinevere B. Juckett among nearly 200 office managers who earned educational distinction.

Nearly 200 outstanding office management professionals were recognized with educational distinction during the much-anticipated American Association of Dental Office Management (AADOM) annual conference, held Sept. 8-10, 2022, in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Among those inducted with honors this year was DALE Foundation President Guinevere B. Juckett, CDA, CPFDA, CRFDA, CDIPC, EFDA, FADAA, FAADOM. Juckett works for a private dental practice in Middlefield, Ohio, as an expanded function dental auxiliary and dental office manager. She has been a DALE Foundation Board Trustee since 2016.

Committed to excellence

"Receiving my Fellowship through AADOM has been life-changing," Juckett says proudly. "I am a believer in lifelong learning. Over the years, I have acquired many DANB certifications, and now, attaining Fellowship has allowed me to grow in dental practice management. I will always strive to improve myself both clinically and professionally — this is my commitment to my practice, patients, doctor, and team."

Fellowship is one of three educational-distinction levels that dedicated dental office managers can achieve through AADOM. The DALE Foundation, DANB's official affiliate, supports AADOM members along their journey.

[Read more about AADOM educational distinctions.](#)

The AADOM Fellowship requirements include completing [DALE Foundation office management courses](#), among other requirements, while the Mastership requirements include completing the [OSAP-DALE Foundation Dental Infection Prevention and Control Certificate Program](#).

Becoming an AADOM Diplomate is the ultimate achievement in dental office management. It's the next tier after achieving Mastership, with the first class of Diplomates inducted in 2021.

This year, a total of 88 Diplomates, 18 Masters and 89 Fellows were recognized.

During the annual conference induction ceremony, AADOM Founder and President Heather Colicchio commended all those who went above and beyond to grow in their career. "Each and every Fellow, Master, and Diplomate has invested a significant amount of time and energy into earning their distinction," she noted. "Becoming an AADOM designation holder is no small accomplishment by any means. They are some of the top dental management professionals in the industry."



Guinevere B. Juckett



Savanah Carlson

A greater purpose

Savanah Carlson, MAADOM, of Revere, Massachusetts, is proud to be among this year's class of Masters, to demonstrate her commitment to learning and involvement in the field. In her 12-year career in dentistry, she has been in dental office management for five years and held membership for six years in AADOM, where she serves as vice president of its Boston Chapter.

Of why she chose to attain AADOM Mastership, Carlson shares: "Many dental administrative teams ask, 'What else can I do to further my education within the dental field? How can I grow within my career and give it purpose?' Earning educational distinction through AADOM motivates dental administrative professionals to continue to strive for excellent teamwork and patient care.

"Everyone wants to feel valued, and pursuing Mastership increases the value dental office management professionals provide," she continues. "Being a MAADOM gives more purpose to being in the dental administrative field."

but also be recognized among her peers as a standout professional. "Becoming a Master, or Fellow or Diplomate, with AADOM is such a milestone," elaborates Bonilla, who has been in dental office management for more than four years. "It truly sets us apart as the best of the best. I am honored and very proud. I have gained so much confidence in myself."

Carlson recommends the certificate program to all other dental professionals who are seeking the right resources to keep them-

selves, their dental colleagues, and their patients safe. "The program gives dental administrative professionals more in-depth knowledge of the clinical side of dentistry," she believes.

"Being able to discuss this topic with not only clinicians, but also patients, builds trust, especially considering the COVID pandemic."

Maranda Rice, FAADOM, of Algonquin, Illinois, adds that she's a stronger professional in part because of the DALE Foundation and its educational offerings. "I found the DALE Foundation's office management courses to be very thorough, an excellent way to further knowledge in human resources and other financial topics. Even after being in the management role for more than 15 years, through taking these courses, I found new things to apply to our practice."

Elevate your dental office management role

Looking for information about the dental office manager's job description, salary, and more? Seeking resources to take your practice management career to the next level? The DALE Foundation can help. Visit www.dalefoundation.org/dental-careers/dental-office-manager for details.



Edineth Bonilla



Maranda Rice

A 'rock star' moment in dental office management

Beverly Wilburn feels honored to be named AADOM's Practice Administrator of the Year for 2022.

Beverly Wilburn, DAADOM, office manager with Karl A. Smith, D.D.S., in Alexandria, Virginia, and Waldorf, Maryland, thought her experience during the 2021 American Association of Dental Office Management (AADOM) conference couldn't be beat.

Last year, Wilburn was among those in the first class to become an AADOM Diplomat — the ultimate achievement in dental office management. Not only was Wilburn one of 19 in the nation then to have achieved the Diplomat distinction, but she also was announced as a 2021 AADOM Practice Administrator of Distinction.

"I thought, 'Wow! It's like reaching the pinnacle level of AADOM accomplishment. I feel good at this place in my career. I'm perfectly happy,'" recalls Wilburn.

But at the most recent AADOM conference, held Sept. 8-10 in Scottsdale, Arizona, Wilburn was ecstatic to learn she'd won the organization's most prestigious award: 2022 Practice Administrator of the Year. The top AADOM award winner is selected annually from among dental practice administrators all over the United States.

[Read more about AADOM's Practice Administrator of the Year award.](#)

"I just didn't expect it," Wilburn says. "The talent pool that I was alongside was just stellar. The winner could have been any one of us. I really don't envy the people who had to make that ultimate decision, because I'm sure it was really hard. I was surprised and felt an overwhelming feeling of joy and love and happiness. It was super cool."

Office management brings satisfaction

Wilburn has been in dental practice management for more than 20 years, after working briefly — very briefly — as a dental assistant.

"I was a dental assistant for one whole day," Wilburn elaborates. "I did take a dental assisting course at a community college when I was looking at dentistry to see if it was something I thought I would like." Ultimately, Wilburn realized she wasn't quite comfortable working chairside and instead jumped at the opportunity to fill an open position in the front office where she was working.

She explains, "I worked as a receptionist there for a couple months, and then I transitioned over to having more of a treatment-coordinator role. I did that for about a year, and then I became a marketing director at that practice. The rest is history." Wilburn ultimately made the switch to dental office management, initially starting out in a large corporate practice setting before transitioning to the small private practice where she's been employed for 17 years and counting.

For Wilburn, dental office management feels like home, where she can be her naturally outgoing self. "The



Beverly Wilburn

best part of being an office manager really is the patients. I love the people, and I love what I do. I enjoy working with the team, presenting treatment to patients, and getting patients scheduled. I love meeting people and being able to have that interaction and seeing them get from point A to point B and bettering smiles and lives."

AADOM accelerates career and connections

Wilburn is grateful to AADOM for helping her grow as a dental office manager. She has been an AADOM member since 2005 — "I'm a lifetime member," she says — and attended her first AADOM conference in 2009. Wilburn has gone to every conference for the past five years. Wilburn earned Fellowship in 2019 and Mastership in 2020.

"Every single year, the AADOM conference gets better. Just when I think they've outdone themselves, they do it again," Wilburn says. "The quality of the education and the connections that AADOM gives to us is unparalleled by any other conference or seminar in dentistry for managers. There's just nothing like it for professionals in office management."

Of course, this year's event stood out to her as being extra special, Wilburn adds: "I felt like a total rock star."

4 tips for officer managers from AADOM's Practice Administrator of the Year

AADOM Practice Administrator of the Year Beverly Wilburn, DAADOM, shares this advice for fellow dental office managers:

1. Pursue education. "I'm a big advocate of educating yourself in every place that you can around the dental world, including through [DALE Foundation office management courses](#). Just because you're an office manager and you work up front doesn't mean you shouldn't know what's happening in the back. Knowing the skills needed and the challenges faced by your clinical teams helps foster better employee-employer relationships."

2. Seek workplace satisfaction. "My doctor and my team help me to be successful in my role. I don't think I would be who I am without the people who work with me. It's important to have a really good, quality environment at work and a happy, healthy team."

3. Find a mentor. "Find a role model — a doctor, another office manager, or a consultant — to help you through the process of growing. You have to have that magic person. Even the people at the very tippy top have somebody hopefully next to them who is pushing them and driving them, whether that be a mentor, a spouse, a child, an employer, or a friend."

"I've received really good knowledge from a lot of people, and I've been very fortunate in that aspect, to have so many good, kind people give lots of genuine advice. Most of those connections have come through AADOM."

4. Elevate your career with AADOM. "Seek [AADOM dental distinctions](#). That's really important. Earning FAADOM, MAADOM, and DAADOM credentials has taught me new things, and I've been doing this for a long time. They make a big difference, overall, in the type of manager that I am now versus the manager that I was five years ago."

"AADOM is exceptional about showing genuine concern for the growth and overall knowledge that office managers have. They want us to be at the top of our game. AADOM-connected office managers are the cream of the crop."

AADOM's Practice Administrators of Distinction for 2022

- Diana Crable
- Emily Estrella, FAADOM
- Tammy Gemmer, DAADOM
- Julie Moreau, FAADOM
- Erika Pusillo, DAADOM
- Tamara Whitley, MAADOM

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