



# DENTAL ASSISTANT FUTURE WORKFORCE

## STAKEHOLDER FORUM SUMMARY REPORT

14 JULY 2022 • CHICAGO

**DANB**



The **DALE** Foundation®  
Official DANB Affiliate

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# WORKSHOP AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions
- Vision Activity: Dealing with Change
- Creating the Future Activities: Gallery Walk & Timeline
- SWOT Analysis Activity
- Dental Workforce Opportunities & Initiatives Activity
- Closing Conversation



# INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION

Workforce development is a critical issue for DANB and the DALE Foundation, and one we recognize that we cannot resolve alone.

This forum session was held on July 14 in Chicago to bring together leaders in dentistry and health care to share perspectives and identify ways we can collectively work toward solutions to assure a robust, effective, and adequately staffed dental assistant workforce.

During the session we explored key issues, identified opportunities, created initiatives, and defined actions.

This document is a concise summary of the work we did during a very full day of discovery and creative thinking.

We are grateful for the dedicated engagement of all participants, and are hopeful that the work done during the session will lead to significant progress in addressing key issues regarding the dental workforce.

# VISION ACTIVITY

In this initial activity, the participants described the three most pressing challenges that their own organization is presently dealing with, the three most pressing changes occurring now across the dental profession, and the top three ways they expect the practice of dentistry in the future will be different from today. They then discussed their individual reflections in small groups, and brought key ideas back to share with the large group.

## SEVEN KEY THEMES

The key ideas were then clustered, and we discovered that we had identified seven key themes for the future of dentistry and the dental assistant role:

- **Certification Value / Awareness**
- **DSO Growth**
- **Technology**
- **Generational Shifts and the Workforce**
- **Business Model of Dentistry**
- **Workforce Development / Education**
- **Leadership Pipeline**



**DSO**

A growth of Dental Support organizations.

Technology is driving the changes of workforce to become a team. Specialist team members - ie. SRT, ETS, etc.

DSO's are going to change the dental industry workforce = access to care for many years.

**TECH**

access to qualified care → remote expansion of telehealth

Technology + telehealth is reshaping the delivery of oral healthcare.

Preparing for operational/automated processes

Need Advanced Technology (Artificial Int., Auto. Assis, etc.)

Trend of dental services being done in dental office

**GENERATIONAL SHIFTS in the WORKFORCE**

Advanced in AI technology will drive innovations in dental workflows & outcomes in dental offices

Partners have driven a lot of changes in workforce & mentality esp in the last 2-3 yrs. Partnerships influence matter

generational shifts

- how to get information
- use of technology
- diversity in workforce

Diversity... Meeting the needs of changing membership

Adapt / Provide

Understand generational Needs

↑ emphasis on diversity equity inclusion belonging

**BUSINESS MODEL**

Need to find a balance between Access + qualified CARE

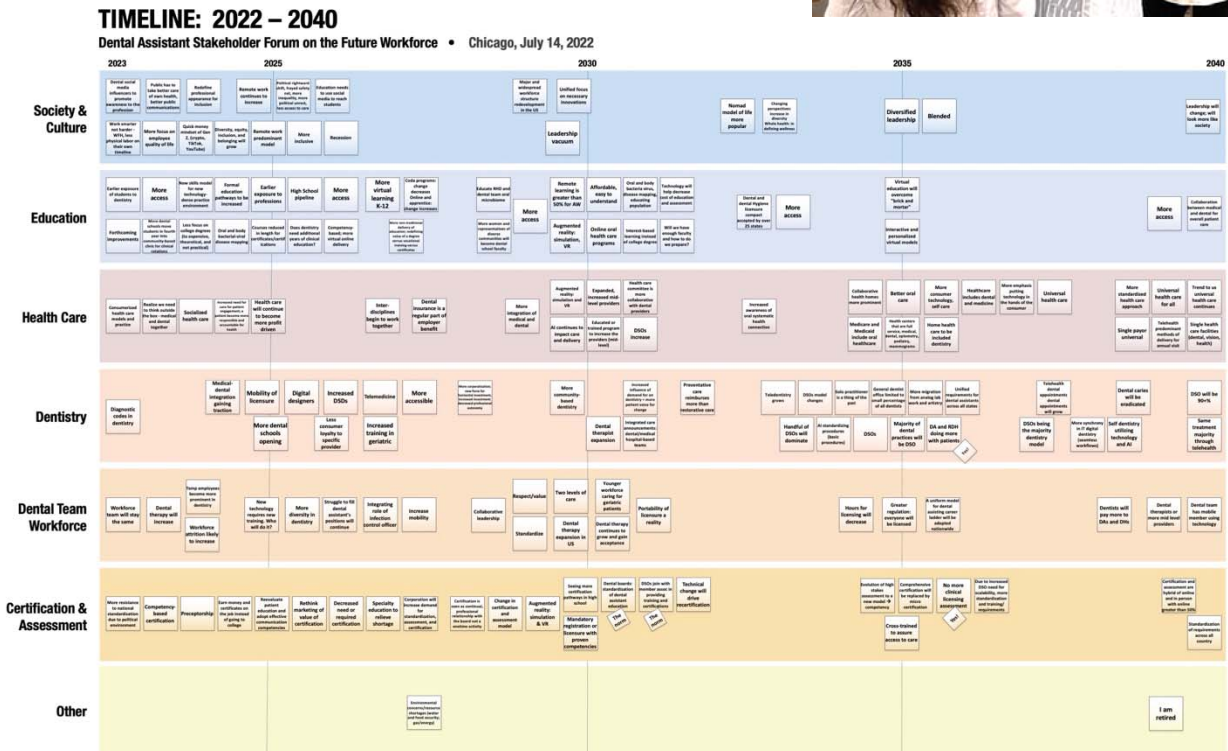
Dichotomy between workload requiring more compensation/benefits/financially better work + demand for training, mentoring (retirement + fear not matching rate of overhead increase)



# GALLERY & TIMELINE ACTIVITY

In the next activity, participants studied a gallery of information about the future of dentistry, society, and health care, and then used Post-it notes to create a detailed timeline of the period from 2022 to 2040 in order to consider how the future may be evolving.

The full timeline has been re-created as a poster, which is available as a separate document.



# SWOT ANALYSIS

The third activity of the Forum was a SWOT analysis of the future of dentistry in 2028. By looking at the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats that the dental profession as a whole faces we gain a deeper understanding of the forces and factors we must deal with in order to achieve our desired goals by 2028.



Participants worked in 6 teams, and then identified the most important elements in each of the four categories.

## Strengths

- Effective organizational structure
- High frequency of in-patient visits
- Patient care & communication (comfort/trust)
- Passion for profession and patient care/patient care
- Purpose-driven job satisfaction
- Leveraging technology

## Weaknesses

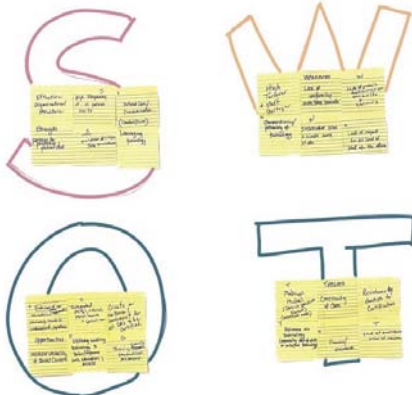
- High turnover and staff shortage
- Standardizing/portability of technology
- Variability of dental assistant requirements in dental practice acts across states
- High variability of the dental assistant's job and scope of functions across states
- Lack of public awareness concerning oral health careers
- Insufficient understanding and appreciation of the contributions of dental team members

## Opportunities

- Incentivize increasing reach to underserved populations (take care of our own communities)
- Increase visibility of dental careers
- Integrated dental, medical, mental health, and social care
- Utilizing evolving technology to tailor/improve care, education, and access
- Create a uniform model for dental assistants
- Training levels, stacked credentials, and microcredentials

## Threats

- Medical model (dentist perceive threat; insurance model)
- Reliance on technology (especially out-of-date or untested technology)
- Continuity of care
- Finances/insurance
- Lack of awareness and appreciation for dental assistant credentialing and education



# 12 KEY INITIATIVES

The final activity of the day focused on identifying cross-organizational initiatives that could be undertaken across the dental profession to assure that our future workforce needs are met. These were the 12 key ideas that emerged. As this work was done by teams working independently, there is some overlap among these ideas which we will address as we go forward.

## 1. DEVELOP STANDARD DENTAL ASSISTANT MODEL

to create a uniform initial and continuing education curriculum, assessment program (exams and certifications) and state regulation. This will enable measurable outcomes for the profession and career portability across state lines.

## 2. DEFINE DA & RDH NATIONAL STANDARD

which will provide a roadmap for states and lead to improved patient care, increased access to care, and growing workforce numbers. It will also provide data required to make the case for certification, establish standardization around skillset, raise awareness, and establish minimum requirements.

## 3. STANDARDIZE EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

New partnerships and collaborations will be formed; training, education, and certification requirements will be established to ensure DAs can effectively perform their scope of duties.

## 4. CREATE UNIFORM REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

in order to establish a minimum base of knowledge across states and to encourage recognition of DANB credentials.

## 5. ENHANCE STATE LICENSING

to establish training and competency standards and demand for formal training, which will result in increased patient and provider safety, increased public awareness, and DA job mobility across state lines.

## 6. ESTABLISH MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ORAL HEALTHCARE SETTING STAFF

with the primary objective of improving patient safety.

## 7. FORM A WORKFORCE COALITION

to address DA low pay and benefits, to educate and encourage employers to increase pay and benefits for DAs, and to define and promote uniformity for the DA profession.

## 8. PARTNER TO RECRUIT A MORE DIVERSE WORKFORCE

that reflects a diverse patient population and increases the size of the workforce.

## 9. IMPROVE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

through marketing campaigns, partnering with new groups (e.g., Junior Achievement) and outreach to underserved populations to grow interest in the profession, to increase DA workforce numbers;

maintaining or improving quality levels is a challenge but critically important.

## 10. CONDUCT FOUNDATIONAL & CROSS-FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION & RECRUITMENT

aimed at increasing diversity in dental assistant education and recruitment and in state dental associations, by standardizing requirements across states, looking for microcredential opportunities, and leveraging new technologies alongside existing dental education facilities to expand access and accelerate the timeframe for students to earn income.

## 11. FOCUS ON RECRUITMENT AND EDUCATION PATHWAYS

including stakeholder engagement, “train the trainer” and speaker programs, and development of workforce models, training standards and micro-credentialing that will lead to early and diverse recruitment, an articulated career ladder, career awareness, and standardization across the profession.

## 12. REVAMP OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

to ensure training is readily available to meet new minimum standards, to help a diverse public understand why they should value oral health career opportunities, to promote diversity, and to instill a sense of professionalism and pride within the DA workforce.



# THANK YOU!

“Thank you to all of you, the DANB and DALE Foundation board members, and our staff. The energy in the room today was really high all day, and there was a lot of laughter.

We are going to be stronger and go further if we do this work on the Dental Workforce together. Hopefully you are connecting with people you can collaborate with, and let’s think about who else should be in the conversation.

Let’s also think about how we can keep this conversation going.”

Laura Skarnulis, DANB and DALE Foundation CEO





