

Dental Assistant Workforce Facts and Insights for Employers



From DANB's 2026 Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey

CERTIFIED DENTAL ASSISTANTS (CDAs) BRING VALUE TO DENTISTS AND DENTAL PRACTICES.

CDAs benefit dental practices in several ways, including:

- Employer loyalty
- Clinical leadership
- Practice productivity

Employer loyalty

FACT: CDAs are more likely to stay with the same employer and are less likely to change jobs.

INSIGHT: Employing CDAs helps dental practices reduce turnover and maintain productivity.

Clinical leadership

FACT: CDAs are more likely to be a lead dental assistant and are more likely to train and supervise other dental assistants.

INSIGHT: CDAs are leaders in the dental practice and contribute to practice efficiency and productivity.

Assuring that dental assistants who are training others have the education and credentials to do so is critical.

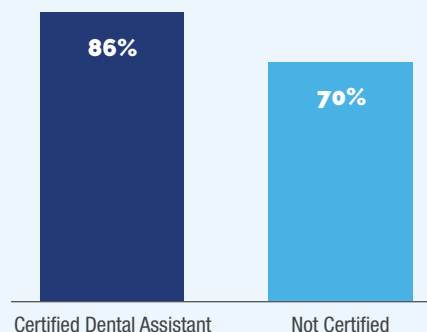
Practice productivity

FACT: The average dental practice hires 3 dental assistants every 2 years, either to fill a vacant role or to grow the team.

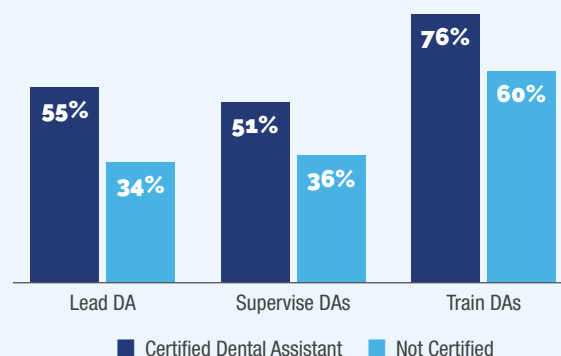
Dental practices spend approximately 5 months hiring and training a new dental assistant. Expenses related to dental assistant turnover and unfilled positions are 25% of the dental assistant's annual pay.*

INSIGHT: CDAs' loyalty to the dental practice and leadership in training dental assistants helps practices maintain and increase their patient volume and profitability.

DENTAL ASSISTANTS WHO HAVE BEEN WITH THE SAME EMPLOYER FOR THE LAST YEAR



DENTAL ASSISTANTS WHO LEAD, TRAIN OR SUPERVISE OTHER ASSISTANTS



DENTAL ASSISTANTS ENJOY THE PROFESSION, BUT CHANGES ARE NEEDED TO IMPROVE RETENTION.

Dental assistants want to stay in the field but pay and career growth are main factors.

FACT: **38%** of entry-level dental assistants (0-2 years of experience) say they want to stay in the field for 5+ years, while 24% are not sure.

INSIGHT: Dental practices have an opportunity to encourage entry-level dental assistants to stay in the profession.

FACT: Higher pay (**88%**) and more career growth opportunities (**52%**) were the top two factors that would encourage dental assistants to stay in the field longer.

INSIGHT: Dental practices that offer career growth opportunities and corresponding pay increases can help attract and retain new dental assistants to their practice and the profession.

FACT: **33%** of all dental assistants perform restorative functions.

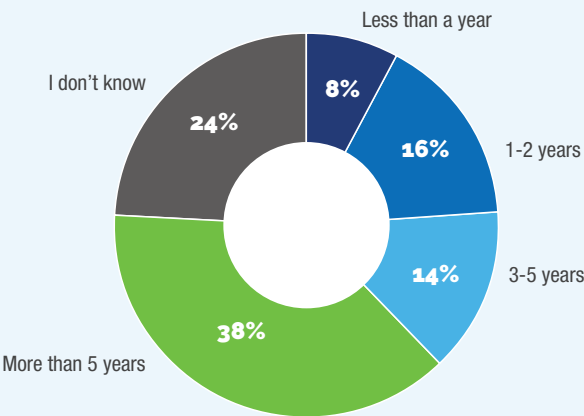
INSIGHT: Increasing and expanding opportunities for dental assistants to gain the education and credentials to perform restorative functions can support their career growth and patient access to oral healthcare.

Dental practices that pay competitive wages can reap financial returns.

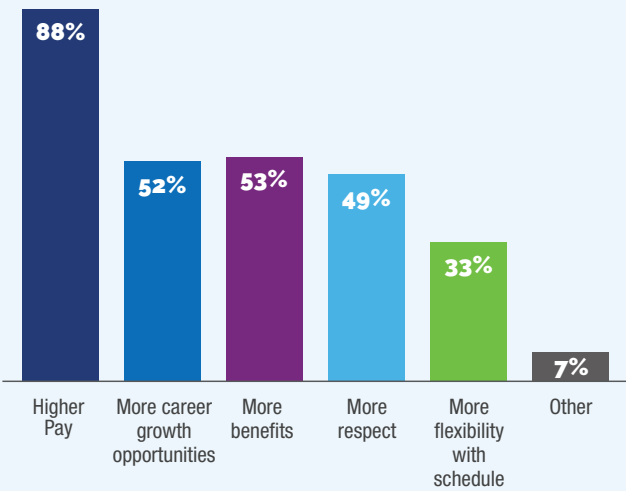
FACT: Dental assistant wages impact satisfaction and retention. CDAs report feeling fairly compensated earning **\$32** per hour, while non-certified assistants say they feel fairly compensated at **\$28** per hour.

INSIGHT: Increasing dental assistant pay can increase retention and offset the costs of turnover, resulting in increased productivity and higher revenues.*

ENTRY-LEVEL DENTAL ASSISTANTS' PLANS TO STAY IN THE PROFESSION



WHAT WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO STAY IN THE PROFESSION LONGER?



All data from DANB's 2026 Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey, unless otherwise noted.

* Source: [The Financial Impact of Dental Assistants research](#)