Dental Assistant

Dental assistants help dentists in a variety of tasks. They are often the first professional the patient comes into contact with in the dental clinic. Dental assistants prepare patients for examination and treatment. They are half of “four-handed” dentistry, helping the dentist in arranging and selecting instruments, preparing materials and equipment, taking and processing x-rays, providing instruction to patients, and keeping detailed and accurate records of patient care. Other duties may include applying decay-preventive material to the teeth, making impressions, and providing oral hygiene instructions.

Where do they work?

In rural Alaska, dental assistants work wherever dentists practice. All dentists require one or more assistants. Most rural Alaskan dental assistants are employed in salaried positions with the Indian Health Service or regional health corporations. Others work in private practice as employees of dentists.

Educational Requirements

The American Dental Association (ADA) offers an accredited curriculum within dental schools, community colleges, vocational-technical schools, and private institutions. Most training sequences are similar:

- Graduation from high school or a GED. Biology, English, and office skills are often desirable. Good grades make it easier to be accepted into dental assistant training.
- Most dental assisting programs require a college entrance exam (ACT, SCAT, or SAT), and possibly the Nelson-Denny or Dental Assisting Aptitude Test (DAAT).
- Dental assisting training programs are between nine months and two years in length and award either a vocational certificate or community college associate degree.

Hourly Wage Range:

$15.51-$28.35 (Mean $21.42)
*based on 2016 Alaska DOL data

Years in School:

2 years or less (after high school graduation).

Academic Programs in Alaska

University of Alaska Anchorage
School for Allied Health, Dental Assisting Program
Anchorage, AK 99508
Phone: (907) 786-6933
Website: https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/alliedhealth/academics/dentalassisting/index.cfm

University of Alaska Fairbanks
Community and Technical College
Dental Assisting Program-Allied Health Department
Jenifer Filotei, Program Coordinator
Phone: (907) 455-2891
Email: ja.filotei@alaska.edu
Website: http://www.ctc.uaf.edu/programs/health/da/index.html

National Contact:

American Dental Association
211 East Chicago Ave.
Chicago, IL 60611
Phone: (312) 440-2500
Website: http://www.ada.org

State Contact:

Alaska Dental Society
9170 Jewel Lake Rd. Suite 100
Anchorage, AK 99502
Phone: (907) 563-3003
Email: https://www.akdental.org/contact.html
Website: http://www.akdental.org/

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