



# Dental Assisting Functions List

*The following is a list of 70 dental assisting tasks developed by the ADA/DANB Alliance in the course of its research. These selected tasks were determined to be representative of a broad range of dental assisting core competencies.*

Functions in each state that correspond to the national Core Competencies Study functions are **numbered** in the Career Ladder Template, using language directly from the state's dental practice act. Functions listed with **bullets** in the *Career Ladder Template* are part of the state's practice act but are not specific matches to DANB research.

1. Perform mouth mirror inspection of the oral cavity
2. Chart existing restorations or conditions
3. Phone in prescriptions at the direction of the dentist
4. Receive and prepare patients for treatment, including seating, positioning chair, and placing napkin
5. Complete laboratory authorization forms
6. Place and remove retraction cord
7. Perform routine maintenance of dental equipment
8. Monitor and respond to post-surgical bleeding
9. Perform coronal polishing procedures
10. Apply effective communication techniques with a variety of patients
11. Transfer dental instruments
12. Place amalgam for condensation by the dentist
13. Remove sutures
14. Dry canals
15. Tie in archwires
16. Demonstrate knowledge of ethics/jurisprudence/patient confidentiality
17. Identify features of rotary instruments
18. Apply topical fluoride
19. Select and manipulate gypsums and waxes
20. Perform supragingival scaling
21. Mix dental materials
22. Expose radiographs
23. Evaluate radiographs for diagnostic quality
24. Provide patient preventive education and oral hygiene instruction
25. Perform sterilization and disinfection procedures
26. Provide pre- and post-operative instructions
27. Place and remove dental dam
28. Pour, trim, and evaluate the quality of diagnostic casts
29. Size and place orthodontic bands and brackets
30. Using the concepts of four-handed dentistry, assist with basic restorative procedures, including prosthodontics and restorative dentistry
31. Identify intraoral anatomy
32. Demonstrate understanding of the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard
33. Place, cure and finish composite resin restorations
34. Place liners and bases
35. Place periodontal dressings
36. Demonstrate understanding of the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard
37. Take and record vital signs
38. Monitor vital signs
39. Clean and polish removable appliances and prostheses
40. Apply pit and fissure sealants
41. Prepare procedural trays/armamentaria set-ups
42. Place orthodontic separators
43. Size and fit stainless steel crowns
44. Take preliminary impressions
45. Place and remove matrix bands
46. Take final impressions
47. Fabricate and place temporary crowns
48. Maintain field of operation during dental procedures through the use of retraction, suction, irrigation, drying, placing and removing cotton rolls, etc.
49. Perform vitality tests
50. Place temporary fillings
51. Carve amalgams
52. Process dental radiographs
53. Mount and label dental radiographs
54. Remove temporary crowns and cements
55. Remove temporary fillings
56. Apply topical anesthetic to the injection site
57. Demonstrate understanding of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guidelines
58. Using the concepts of four-handed dentistry, assist with basic intraoral surgical procedures, including extractions, periodontics, endodontics, and implants
59. Monitor nitrous oxide/oxygen analgesia
60. Maintain emergency kit
61. Remove permanent cement from supragingival surfaces
62. Remove periodontal dressings
63. Place post-extraction dressings
64. Fabricate custom trays, to include impression and bleaching trays, and athletic mouthguards
65. Recognize basic medical emergencies
66. Recognize basic dental emergencies
67. Respond to basic medical emergencies
68. Respond to basic dental emergencies
69. Remove post-extraction dressings
70. Place stainless steel crown



## Levels of Supervision

An important consideration in the discussion of the delegation of tasks to dental assistants is that of supervision of dental assistants by their dentist-employers. The American Dental Association (ADA) has identified four levels of supervision for dental auxiliaries, including dental assistants, which it defines in its “Comprehensive Policy Statement on Allied Dental Personnel,” (2006: 307) which is part of its *Current Policies*, last updated in 2007. Note that “allied dental personnel” refers to dental assistants, dental hygienists and dental laboratory technicians.

The four levels of supervision defined by the ADA are as follows:

**Personal supervision:** A dentist is personally operating on a patient and authorizes the allied dental personnel to aid treatment by concurrently performing a supportive procedure.

**Direct supervision:** A dentist is in the dental office or treatment facility, personally diagnoses the condition to be treated, personally authorizes the procedures, and remains in the dental office or treatment facility while the procedures are being performed by the allied dental personnel and, before dismissal of the patient, evaluates the performance of the allied dental personnel.

**Indirect supervision:** A dentist is in the dental office or treatment facility, has personally diagnosed the condition to be treated, authorizes the procedures, and remains in the dental office or treatment facility while the procedures are being performed by the allied dental personnel, and will evaluate the performance of the allied dental personnel.

**General supervision:** A dentist is not required to be in the dental office or treatment facility when procedures are being performed by the allied dental personnel, but has personally diagnosed the condition to be treated, has personally authorized the procedures and will evaluate the performance of the allied dental personnel.

Furthermore, the ADA’s Comprehensive Policy Statement on Allied Dental Personnel stipulates that intraoral expanded functions should be performed by allied dental personnel “only under the direct supervision of a dentist.”

Because the study of dental assisting core competencies undertaken by the ADAA/DANB Alliance did not address the question of supervision, the ADAA/DANB Alliance does not make any recommendations as to the levels of supervision that should be necessary for the delegation of the tasks included in the study to dental assistants. However, the ADAA/DANB Alliance believes it is important to call attention to the fact that, while the ADA has defined supervision levels in the aforementioned policy statement, which governs the ADA’s own activities and the activities of its members, these definitions have not been uniformly adopted by the dental boards of every U.S. state or district.

**For the purposes of this volume, if a state’s dental practice act specifically defines levels of supervision, the state-specific definition is noted in the template.**



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Education/Training/ Credential Required	Job Title According to State of NM	Proposed Standardized National Job Titles (see below)	Radiography Requirements	Functions <b>NOT</b> Permitted by Dental Assistants in NM
<p>To perform <b>expanded functions</b> under the general supervision of a licensed dentist in the state of New Mexico, a <b>dental assistant</b> must earn <b>state certification</b>. To qualify, one must:</p> <p><u>Rubber cup coronal polishing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successfully complete an Approved Training Program <b>and/or</b> assist with/observe five cases of rubber cup coronal polishing on children or adults <b>and</b></li> <li>Pass DANB's national Coronal Polish (CP) exam <b>and</b></li> <li>Apply to the New Mexico Board of Dental Health Care (NMBDHC) for advanced certification in coronal polishing <b>and</b></li> <li>Pass the state take-home jurisprudence exam <b>and</b></li> <li>Perform function 5 times under personal supervision of a dentist or dental hygienist</li> </ul> <p><u>Pit and Fissure Sealants:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have 2,080 hours of dental assisting chairside experience in the two years prior to application <b>and</b></li> <li>Successfully complete an Approved Training Program <b>and</b></li> <li>Assist with/observe 12 pit and fissure sealant applications on children or adults <b>and</b></li> <li>Pass DANB's national Sealants (SE) exam <b>and</b></li> <li>Apply for advanced certification in pit and fissure sealants to the NMBDHC</li> <li>Pass the state take-home jurisprudence exam <b>and</b></li> <li>Apply pit &amp; fissure sealants five times under personal supervision of dentist or dental hygienist</li> </ul> <p><u>Topical Fluoride:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successfully complete a Board-approved training program <b>and/or</b> assist with/observe five cases of application of topical fluoride <b>and</b></li> <li>Apply for advanced certification in topical fluoride to the NMBDHC <b>and</b></li> <li>Pass DANB's national Topical Fluoride (TF) exam <b>and</b></li> <li>Pass the state take-home jurisprudence exam <b>and</b></li> <li>Apply topical fluoride five times under personal supervision of dentist or dental hygienist</li> </ul>	<p>Dental Assistant with state certification in expanded functions</p>	<p>Expanded Functions Dental Assistant (EFDA)</p> <hr/> <p>DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) or Registered Dental Assistant</p>	<p>To legally operate dental x-ray equipment and perform dental radiographic procedures in the state of New Mexico, a dental assistant <b>must be certified</b>. To obtain this certification, one must:</p> <p>Pass the written exam on radiation health and safety administered by the New Mexico Board of Dental Health Care (NMBODHC)</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p>Pass the national DANB Radiation Health and Safety (RHS) exam</p> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p>Pass a state radiologic clinical exam (technique test demonstrating proficiency in the exposure of a full-mouth intra oral radiographic series or panoramic film as established by the NMBODHC), within six months of passing either of the written exams (listed above)</p> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p>Pass the state take-home jurisprudence exam</p> <p><b>AND</b></p> <p>Apply to the New Mexico Board of Dental Health Care for certification to perform radiography</p>	<p>The following functions are <b>not</b> permitted by any level of dental assistant:</p> <p>46. Final impressions for restorations or prosthetic appliances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removal of, or addition to, the hard or soft tissue of the oral cavity</li> <li>Diagnosis and treatment planning</li> <li>Fitting and adaptation of prostheses</li> <li>Final fitting, adaptation, seating and cementation of any fixed or removable dental appliance or restoration, including but not limited to inlays, crowns, space maintainers, habit devices or splints</li> <li>Irrigation and medication of canals, cone try-in, reaming, filing or filling of root canals</li> <li>Other services defined as the practice of dentistry or dental hygiene</li> </ul>
<p>A <b>dental assistant</b> in the state of New Mexico is an individual who may perform basic supportive dental procedures under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist (see notes on opposite page). There are no education or training requirements for this level of dental assistant.</p>	<p>Dental Assistant</p>	<p>Dental Assistant</p> <hr/> <p>Entry Level Dental Assistant</p>	<p>← The ADAA/DANB Alliance developed a listing of standardized job titles (left) based on its national Core Competencies Study conducted from 2002-2005.</p> <p>The same study utilized a list of 70 job functions which were determined to be representative of a broad range of dental assisting core competencies.</p> <p>Functions in this state that relate to the national DANB/ADAA Core Competencies Study are numbered to the right, using language directly from this state's dental practice act. (The numbers correspond to the study's task numbering system.) →</p> <p>Functions listed with bullets are part of this state's practice act but are not specific matches to DANB/ADAA research.</p> <p>These state templates reflect the work being done by the ADAA/DANB Alliance to support a uniform national model for one set of dental assisting tasks, levels and requirements, which will serve as a viable career ladder for dental assistants.</p>	

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Job Title  
According to  
State of NM

Allowable Functions  
(Functions with numbers relate specifically to Core Competency designations;  
functions with bullets are in this state's practice act but are not specific matches to DANB research)

Dental  
Assistant  
with state  
certification  
in expanded  
functions

**Under General Supervision\***

- 9. Rubber cup coronal polishing
- 18. Application of topical fluoride
- 22. Place and expose dental radiographs
- 40. Pit and fissure sealants

Dental  
Assistant

**Under Indirect Supervision\***

- 9. Rubber cup coronal polishing
- 18. Application of topical fluoride
- 40. Pit and fissure sealant application
  - Any basic supportive dental procedure, not excluded elsewhere in rule or in statute

**Note:** Rubber cup coronal polishing, application of topical fluoride and pit and fissure sealants must be approved by the dentist or dental hygienist upon completion.

**DANB's Note on Allowable Dental Assisting Functions**

In the state of New Mexico, all dental assistants may:

- Perform infection control and occupational safety procedures
- Perform other duties not specified by this state's dental practice act

At this time, DANB cannot list all allowable dental assisting functions for each state because some states' dental practice acts outline very specific allowable functions, while others outline only prohibited functions and some contain minimal or no regulation of dental assisting duties.

\*General Supervision: Authorization by a dentist of the procedures to be used by a dental assistant and the execution of the procedures in accordance with a dentist's diagnosis and treatment plan and in facilities designated by rule of the board

Indirect Supervision: A Licensee is present in the treatment facility while authorized treatments are being performed by a dental assistant