

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 ND	Proposed Standardized National Job Titles (see below)	Radiography Requirements	Functions NOT Permitted by Dental Assistants in ND
<p>To apply pit and fissure sealants in the state of North Dakota under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist, a dental assistant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be a Registered Dental Assistant (<i>see requirements below</i>) AND Provide documentation of a successful completion of a North Dakota board-approved sealant course 	<p>Registered Dental Assistant (RDA) <i>qualified to apply pit and fissure sealants</i></p>	<p>Expanded Functions Dental Assistant (EFDA)</p>	<p>To legally operate dental x-ray equipment and perform dental radiographic procedures in the state of North Dakota, one must be a Registered Dental Assistant or Qualified Dental Assistant (<i>see requirements to the left</i>).</p>	<p>The following functions are not permitted by any level of dental assistant:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling, root planing or gingival curettage Placing or contouring of a final restoration, excluding a crown which has not been cemented by a dentist Placing bases or cavity liners Apply pit and fissure sealants (unless requirements have been met) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnosis and treatment planning Surgery on hard or soft tissue Administer or titrate local anesthetics, sedation or general anesthesia drugs Any irreversible dental procedure or procedures which require the professional judgment and skill of a licensed dentist Any intraoral procedure which would lead to the fabrication of any appliance, with the exception of taking impressions for passive post-treatment orthodontic retainers which do not replace missing teeth. Dental assistants may take impressions for athletic mouth guards, splints, bleaching trays or rapid palatal expanders Activating any type of orthodontic appliance Cementing or bonding orthodontic bands or brackets that have not been placed by a dentist Measuring the gingival sulcus with a periodontal probe
<p>To earn status as a Registered Dental Assistant (RDA) in the state of North Dakota, one must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold current national DANB Certification or Be certified by DANB within two years of application and complete 16 hours of continuing education or Complete a CODA-accredited or North Dakota board-approved dental assisting program within one year of application or Complete a CODA-accredited or North Dakota board approved dental assisting program within two years of application and 16 hours of continuing education AND Maintain current CPR certification AND Apply for registration to the North Dakota State Board of Dental Examiners (NDSBDE) 	<p>Registered Dental Assistant (RDA)</p>	<p>DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) or Registered Dental Assistant (RDA)</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>To earn status as a Qualified Dental Assistant (QDA) in the state of North Dakota, one must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pass DANB's RHS and ICE exams within one year of application or Pass DANB's RHS and ICE exams within two years of application and 16 hours of continuing education AND Complete 650 hours of dental assistance instruction including on-the-job training AND Pass a written examination of the laws and rules governing the practice of dentistry in North Dakota within one year of application AND Maintain current CPR certification AND Apply to the NDSBDE 	<p>Qualified Dental Assistant (QDA)</p>	<p>Dental Assistant</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>A dental assistant in the state of North Dakota may perform basic supportive dental procedures specified by the state dental practice act (see opposite page) under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist.</p> <p>There are no education or training requirements for this level of dental assisting.</p>	<p>Dental Assistant</p>	<p>Entry Level Dental Assistant</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>	

Job Title
According to
State of ND

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)

Registered
Dental
Assistant
(RDA)
*qualified
to apply pit
and fissure
sealants*

Under Direct Supervision*

- 40. Apply pit and fissure sealants and adjust sealants with a slow-speed handpiece

Under Indirect Supervision*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Place retraction cord in the gingival sulcus of a prepared tooth prior to the dentist taking an impression of the tooth 9. Polish the coronal surfaces of the teeth with a rubber cup or brush only after necessary scaling by a hygienist or dentist 13. Remove sutures 14. Dry root canal with paper points 15. Place, tie and remove ligature wires and elastic ties 18. Apply anticariogenic agents topically 27. Place and remove rubber dams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 29. Preselect and prefit orthodontic bands 35, 62, 63. Place and remove periodontal dressings, dry socket medications/packing 42. Place orthodontic separators 44. Take impressions for fixed or removable orthodontic appliances, athletic mouth guards, bleaching trays, bite splints, flippers and removable prosthetic repairs 49. Perform nonsurgical clinical and laboratory oral diagnosis tests, including pulp testing, for interpretation by the dentist | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 59. Monitor a patient who has been inducted by a dentist into nitrous-oxide relative analgesia 61. Remove excess cement from inlays, crowns, bridges and orthodontic appliances with hand instruments only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply desensitizing solutions to the external surfaces of the teeth • Take occlusal bite registration for study casts • Polish restorations • All duties designated to Qualified Dental Assistants, below |
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Under Direct Supervision*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Orally transmit a prescription that has been authorized by the supervising dentist 15. Place and remove arch wires or appliances that have been activated by a dentist | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 29. Place orthodontic brackets using an indirect bonding technique by seating the transfer tray loaded with brackets previously positioned in the dental laboratory by a licensed dentist 45. Place and remove matrix bands and wedges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acid-etch enamel surfaces prior to direct bonding of orthodontic brackets or composite restorations • Take face bow transfers • Adjust permanent crowns outside of the mouth |
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Under General Supervision*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 47, 54. Fabricate, adjust, place, recement or remove a temporary crown, bridge, or onlay or temporary restorative material. This applies only to dentitions actively under treatment for which a permanent restoration is being fabricated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut and remove arch wires or replace loose bands, loose brackets or other orthodontic appliances for palliative treatment |
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Under Direct Supervision*

- 22. Take dental radiographs (*see "Radiography Requirements" on previous page*)
 - All duties designated to Dental Assistants, below

Qualified
Dental
Assistant
(QDA)

Under Direct Supervision*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 37. Take and record pulse, blood pressure, and temperature 39. Receive removable dental prosthesis for cleaning or repair 44. Take impressions for study casts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 56. Apply topical medications and drugs to oral tissues, including topical anesthetic, but not including desensitizing or caustic agents or anticariogenic agents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take and record preliminary dental medical history for the interpretation by the dentist • Hold impression trays in the mouth (e.g., reversible hydrocolloids, rubber base) |
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Dental
Assistant

***Direct Supervision:** The 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 dental assistant, and, before dismissal of the patient, evaluates the performance of the dental assistant.
Indirect Supervision: The 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 dental assistant.
General Supervision: The dentist has authorized the procedures and they are carried out in accordance with the dentist's diagnosis and treatment plan. The dentist is not required to be in the treatment facility.