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Measuring Dental Assisting Excellence™

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2006 Salary Survey Results Show CDAs Are Still Earning More!

The latest Dental Assisting National Board, Inc. survey on salary variances in the dental assisting profession revealed that assistants who are DANB Certified make more than those who are not Certified. Responding to many requests regarding salary information (from Certificants, employers, national organizations, etc.) DANB continues to conduct a *Show Me The Money Salary Survey* every two years. The results of the 2006 survey appear in this issue of *Certified Press*.

DANB's 2006 *Show Me The Money Salary Survey* indicates that nationally, the median salary of Certified Assistants is \$16.50 an hour, compared to the median hourly wage for non-Certified assistants of \$14.74. (The amount for non-Certified assistants was determined by taking the national median hourly wage for non-Certified assistants last reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor

Statistics in 2002 and adjusting at 3% per year for inflation).

This year's survey provides encouraging information for DANB CDAs, as well as those who employ them. The gap between dental assistants who are DANB Certified and those who are not is wider since the last DANB salary survey was conducted in 2004. In 2006, DANB Certified Assistants made an average of \$1.76 more an hour than non-DANB Certified assistants. That difference between the two groups was \$1.58 only two years ago. This CDA differential is increasing faster than the rate of inflation.

Results from the 2006 DANB salary survey indicate that employers benefit from having DANB CDAs on their dental teams. Keeping in mind that recruitment and retention are major issues in the oral healthcare community, the survey shows that

CDAs, on average, stay with the same employer 9.3 years (Chart 1), up from the 8.6 reported two years ago. In addition, the amount of time a DANB CDA is employed as a practicing dental assistant has risen to 15.9 years on average, up from 14.4 years reported in 2004. According to the American Dental Association's 2004 *Survey of Dental Practice: Employment of Dental Practice Personnel*, dental assistants stay in the profession for an average of 12.1 years, and stay with the same practice for an average of 6.8 years.

Therefore, the survey shows that DANB Certificants stay in the field and with the same employer about a third longer than the pool of all dental assistants, both Certified and non-Certified.

For this third DANB *Show Me The Money Salary Survey*, approximately 5,000 surveys were mailed to a nationwide random sample, stratified by state, of current DANB Certified Assistants. An impressive 28% of recipients returned the survey to ensure solid research data.

According to the results of the survey, most DANB Certified Assistants work full-time (Chart 1) and in General Dentistry (Chart 2) in a Private Practice office setting (Chart 3).

Continued on page 2

National Median Hourly Salary

\$16.50

Full-time DANB Certified Dental Assistants



\$14.74*

Full-time Non-DANB Certified Dental Assistants

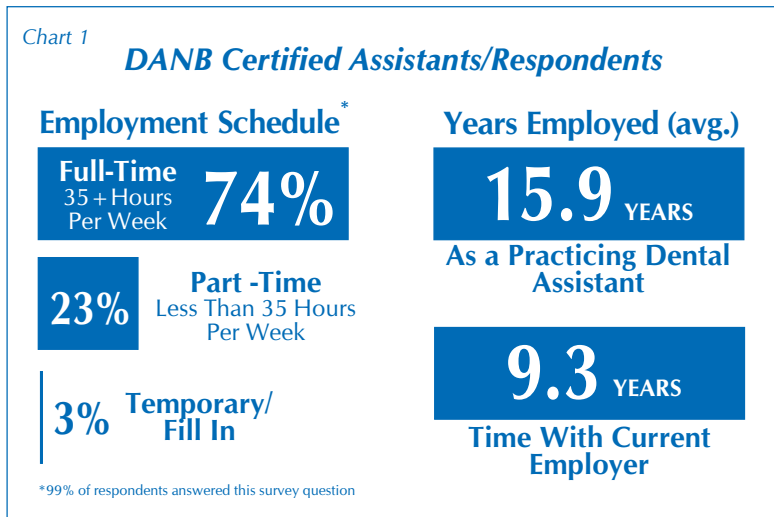


Chart 2
DANB Certified Assistants/Respondents Median Hourly Salary

By Type of Practice

73% of respondents work as CDAs in general dentistry

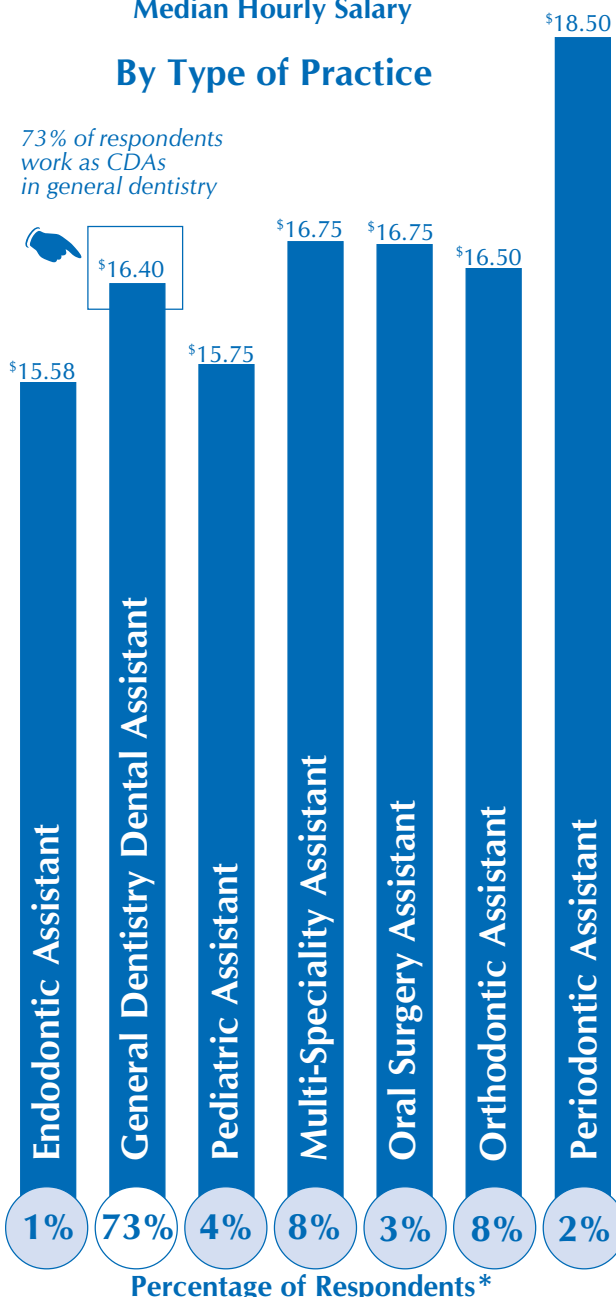
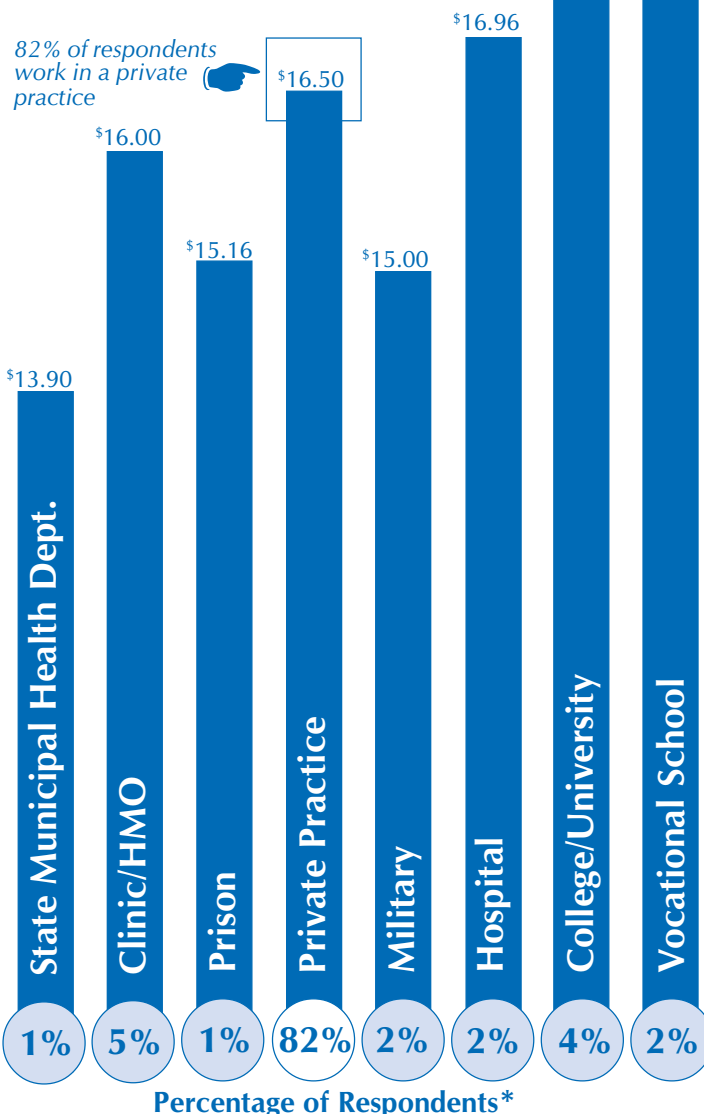


Chart 3
DANB Certified Assistants/Respondents Median Hourly Salary

By Practice/Office Setting

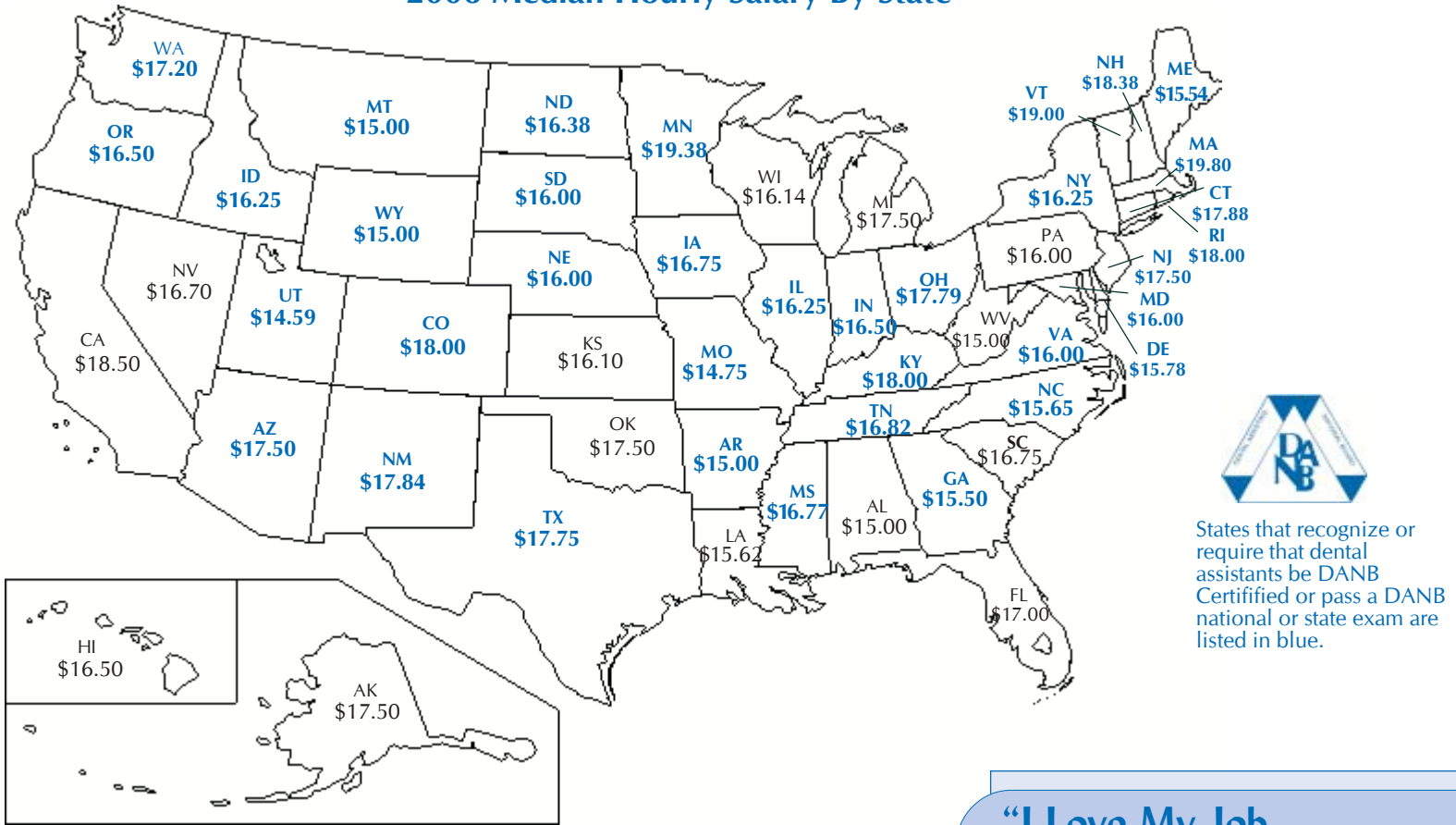
82% of respondents work in a private practice



* 2002 Bureau of Labor Statistics (adjusted for cost of living increases—3% per year)

Chart 4

2006 Median Hourly Salary By State



States that recognize or require that dental assistants be DANB Certified or pass a DANB national or state exam are listed in blue.

Certified Assistants working in specialty practices (Chart 2) make more than those employed in general dental practice, with periodontic assistants earning the most at \$18.50 an hour.

The West Coast region of the United States (Chart 4; see above) pays the most on average for Certified Assistants, followed by the North Central, Northeast, South Central, and Southeast regions of the country, respectively.

More than half of all DANB Certified Assistants responding to DANB's survey receive paid vacation

(86%), paid holidays (82%), free dental care (61%), paid sick leave (60%), reimbursement for continuing education (52%), a 401K pension plan (61%), health insurance (55%), and a uniform allowance (50%).

Less than half of those DANB Certificants surveyed received: a bonus (43%), reimbursement for Certification or state registration renewal (30%), dental insurance (24%), life insurance (22%), profit sharing (15%), reimbursement for ADAA dues (16%), disability insurance (16%), malpractice insurance (7%) and child care allowance (2%).

More than half of all DANB Certified Assistants responding to the survey believe that the following are benefits to being DANB Certified: self-gratification (85%), personal pride (77%), and recognition by their employer (58%).

Many believe there are additional benefits, such as career mobility through a nationally recognized credential (47%), recognition by the dental community (46%), higher salary than non-Certified assistants (46%), patient respect for the credential (37%), potential for more duties beyond non-Certified colleagues (38%), elevation of the profession (38%), state allowance of more duties than non-certified (31%) and representation on the DANB Board of Directors through Certificant-at-Large (23%).

Support for the notion that certified employees earn more than non-certified individuals comes from a survey done in September 2003 by the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA). Of the certification and licensure professionals from 271 national certification organizations who responded to NOCA's online poll, 52% reported that certificants in their respective industries received higher compensation than those without certification.

With 35 states currently recognizing or requiring that dental assistants are DANB Certified or pass a DANB national or state exam (Chart 4), DANB is working to enhance the dental assisting profession by promoting a defined career ladder for dental assistants, leading to a more highly qualified dental team and increased public protection.▲

"I Love My Job...."

Dental assisting has wonderful opportunities. The true joy is when patients see a smile on my face every day.

—Salary Survey respondent

DANB's 2006 Salary Survey provided the opportunity for respondents to offer comments. Here is what some had to say:

"I am a firm believer in dental education and Certification for all dental assistants. It is the only way we will finally be recognized as the quality dental professionals we are."

"I am very excited about the competency steps being initiated by DANB and the ADAA. I hope it brings more respect and better pay for CDAs."

"I firmly believe in mandatory credentialing for dental assistants. Credentialing is in the best interest of the patient because it ensures a basic level of knowledge."

"To me, the CDA represents the test of my knowledge of assisting as a whole."

"Much more respect has come to our profession due to banding together as one. All of the hard work done by professional dental assistants before me has enabled me to make a good salary and have good living standards. I am grateful indeed."

"I don't have to be certified, but I choose to because of the pride I receive from my continuing education."

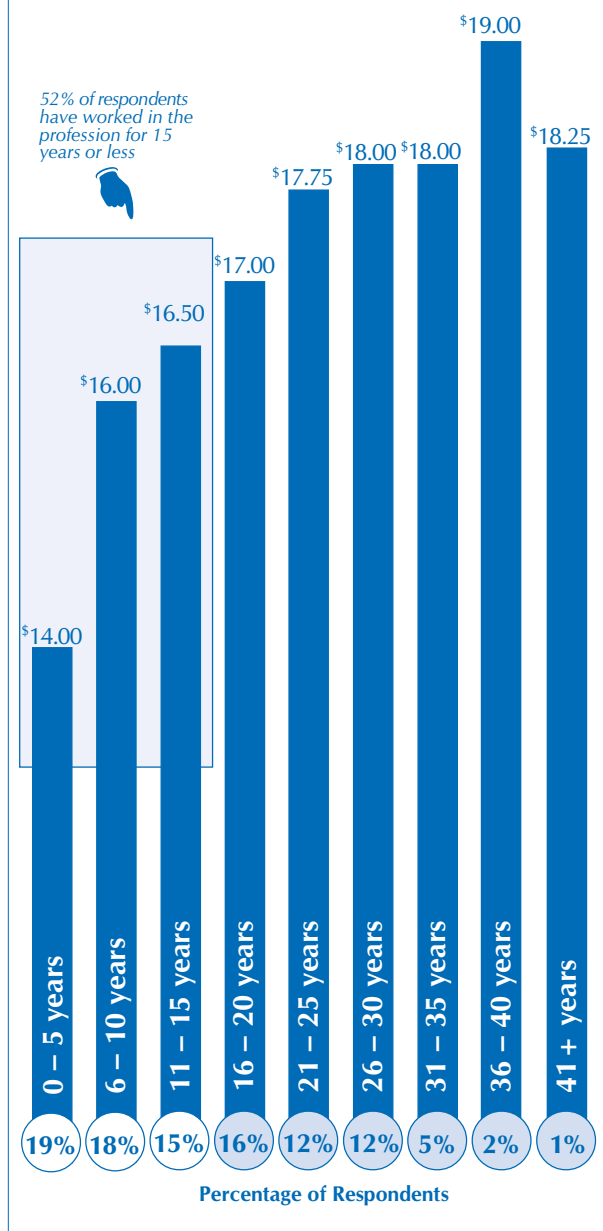
"I love my career! It has been so rewarding. I only regret that I will have to retire someday—hopefully not real soon!"

"I feel proud that I am certified and I have a better understanding of dentistry than the other assistants [in my office]."

"I have been a dental assistant for 34 years and am very happy it is recognized as a profession now!"

Chart 5

DANB Certified Assistants/Respondents Median Hourly Salary By Years in the Profession



Official Definition of "Certified Dental Assistant" Adopted

At the August 2006 DANB Board meeting, DANB's Board of Directors voted to adopt the following definition as the standard definition of "Certified Dental Assistant" (CDA):

"A CDA is a dental assistant, dental hygienist, or dentist who

1. meets the education and/or experience prerequisites established by the Dental Assisting National Board, Inc. (DANB), AND

2. passes DANB's Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) Examination, which is comprised of component exams covering Radiation Health and Safety (RHS), Infection Control (ICE), and General Chairside Assisting (GC), AND
3. is currently CPR certified, AND
4. continues to maintain the credential by meeting DANB Recertification Requirements (including continuing education, current CPR certification, and annual fee)."