

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 AR	Proposed Standardized National Job Titles (see below)	Radiography Requirements	Functions NOT Permitted by Dental Assistants in AR
<p>A Registered Dental Assistant (RDA) in the state of Arkansas is an individual who holds a permit from the Arkansas State Board of Dental Examiners (ASBDE) to perform one or more of the expanded functions listed on the opposite page.</p> <p>To be issued a permit for any of the expanded functions (except Sedation Monitoring, which has additional requirements), one must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hold a current national DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) Certification OR Graduate from a CODA-accredited dental assisting program <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apply to the ASBDE <p>Dental assistants who do not meet the above qualifications may still earn RDA status by completing the following requirements:</p> <p>Coronal polishing: Successfully complete an Arkansas board-approved course in coronal polishing, pass an Arkansas board-approved coronal polishing exam, and apply to the ASBDE</p> <p>Monitor nitrous oxide/oxygen analgesia: Successfully complete an Arkansas board-approved nitrous oxide administration and monitoring course, submit a copy of the certificate of completion to the ASBDE, successfully complete the Arkansas jurisprudence exam, and hold CPR certification</p> <p>Sedation monitoring: Hold a current permit for nitrous oxide administration, hold current CPR certification, hold current DANB Certification (or RDA, RN or LPN), successfully complete an Arkansas Board-approved course in anesthesia assistant training, successfully complete the Arkansas jurisprudence exam, and apply to the ASBDE.</p> <p>Note: To renew a permit to perform expanded functions, RDAs must provide the ASBDE proof of completing two hours of continuing education in infection control every two years.</p>	<p>Registered Dental Assistant (RDA)</p>	<p>Expanded Functions Dental Assistant (EFDA)</p> <p>DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) or Registered Dental Assistant (RDA)</p>	<p>In order to legally operate dental x-ray equipment and perform dental radiographic procedures in the state of Arkansas, a dental assistant <i>must</i> be an RDA who holds a permit in radiology from the Arkansas State Board of Dental Examiners.</p> <p>To obtain this permit, one must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hold a current national DANB Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) Certification OR Graduate from a CODA-accredited dental assisting program OR Successfully complete an Arkansas board-approved radiology course <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pass a Arkansas board-approved radiology exam <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Apply to the Arkansas State Board of Dental Examiners 	<p>The following functions are not permitted by any level of dental assistant:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 20. Scaling, root planing and curettage 29. Final placement of orthodontic brackets 33. Placement, seating, or removal of any final or permanent restorations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis and treatment planning • Surgical or cutting procedures on hard or soft tissue • Prescription, injection, inhalation, and parenteral administration of drugs (except where permitted by the Arkansas Board) • Any procedure that contributes to or results in irreversible alteration of the oral anatomy • Those functions relegated to a dental hygienist
<p>A dental assistant in the state of Arkansas may perform basic supportive dental procedures specified by the state dental practice act (see opposite page) under the personal 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>Dental Assistant</p>	<p>Dental Assistant</p> <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>	

Job Title According to State of AR	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)
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Registered Dental Assistant (RDA)	
Dental Assistant	

	<p><u>Under Personal Supervision*</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Perform coronal polishing 22. Operate dental radiographic equipment (<i>see "Radiography Requirements" on previous page</i>) 59. Induce and monitor nitrous oxide/ oxygen analgesia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor patients who are under deep sedation or general anesthesia only in offices where the dentist is permitted to perform those services (<i>see "Sedation Monitoring" requirements on previous page</i>) • All duties designated to Dental Assistants, under the same level of required supervision <hr style="border: 0.5px solid black; margin: 20px 0;"/> <p><u>Under Personal Supervision*</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any reversible dental task or procedure assigned by the supervising dentist that does not require a permit or the professional skills of a licensed dentist or licensed dental hygienist
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***Personal Supervision:** The dentist is in the office or treatment facility, has personally diagnosed the condition to be treated, has personally authorized the procedures, remains in the office or treatment facility while the procedures are being performed, and evaluates the performance of the Dental Assistant before the dismissal of the patient.