

TITLE IV  
AUXILIARY PERSONNEL

## CHAPTER 20

## DENTAL ASSISTANTS

[Prior to 5/18/88, Dental Examiners, Board of[320]]

**650—20.1(153) Registration required.** A person shall not practice on or after July 1, 2001, as a dental assistant unless the person has registered with the board and received a certificate of registration pursuant to this chapter.

**650—20.2(153) Definitions.** As used in this chapter:

*“Dental assistant”* means any person who, under the supervision of a dentist, performs any extraoral services including infection control or the use of hazardous materials or performs any intraoral services on patients. The term “dental assistant” does not include persons otherwise actively licensed in Iowa to practice dental hygiene or nursing who are engaged in the practice of said profession.

*“Dental assistant trainee”* means any person who is engaging in on-the-job training to meet the requirements for registration and who is learning the necessary skills under the personal supervision of a licensed dentist. Trainees may also engage in on-the-job training in dental radiography pursuant to 650—22.3(136C,153).

*“Direct supervision”* means that the dentist is present in the treatment facility, but it is not required that the dentist be physically present in the treatment room while the registered dental assistant is performing acts assigned by the dentist.

*“General supervision”* means that a dentist has examined the patient and has delegated the services to be provided by a registered dental assistant, which are limited to all extraoral duties, dental radiography, intraoral suctioning, and use of a curing light, intraoral digital imaging and intraoral camera. The dentist need not be present in the facility while these services are being provided.

*“Personal supervision”* for intraoral procedures means the dentist is physically present in the treatment room to oversee and direct all intraoral or chairside services of the dental assistant trainee. “Personal supervision” for extraoral procedures means a licensee or registrant is physically present in the treatment room to oversee and direct all extraoral services of the dental assistant trainee.

*“Public health supervision”* means all of the following:

1. The dentist authorizes and delegates the services provided by a registered dental assistant to a patient in a public health setting, with the exception that services may be rendered without the patient’s first being examined by a licensed dentist;
2. The dentist is not required to provide future dental treatment to patients served under public health supervision;
3. The dentist and the registered dental assistant have entered into a written supervision agreement that details the responsibilities of each licensee/registrant, as specified in subrule 20.16(2); and
4. The registered dental assistant has an active Iowa registration and a minimum of one year of clinical practice experience.

*“Registered dental assistant”* means any person who has met the requirements for registration and has been issued a certificate of registration.

*“Trainee status expiration date”* means 12 months from the date of issuance.

[ARC 8369B, IAB 12/16/09, effective 1/20/10; ARC 0465C, IAB 11/28/12, effective 1/2/13; ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15; ARC 3489C, IAB 12/6/17, effective 1/10/18]

**650—20.3(153) Applicant responsibilities.** An applicant for dental assistant trainee status or dental assistant registration bears full responsibility for each of the following:

**20.3(1)** Providing accurate, up-to-date, and truthful information on the application including, but not limited to, prior professional experiences, education, training, examination scores, and disciplinary history.

**20.3(2)** Submitting complete application materials. An application for trainee status will be considered active for 90 days from the date the application is received. An application for dental

assistant registration, reactivation, or reinstatement will be considered valid for 180 days from the date the application is received. If the applicant does not submit all materials within this time period, or if the applicant does not meet the requirements for trainee status, dental assistant registration, or reinstatement, the application shall be considered incomplete and the applicant must submit a new application and application fee.

[ARC 3489C, IAB 12/6/17, effective 1/10/18]

#### **650—20.4(153) Scope of practice.**

**20.4(1)** In all instances, a dentist assumes responsibility for determining, on the basis of diagnosis, the specific treatment patients will receive and which aspects of treatment may be delegated to qualified personnel as authorized in these rules.

**20.4(2)** A licensed dentist may delegate to a dental assistant those procedures for which the dental assistant has received training. This delegation shall be based on the best interests of the patient. Such services shall be delegated by and performed under the supervision of a licensed dentist and may include:

- a. Placement and removal of dry socket medication;
- b. Placement of periodontal dressings;
- c. Testing pulp vitality;
- d. Preliminary charting of existing dental restorations and teeth;
- e. Glucose testing;
- f. Phlebotomy; and
- g. Expanded function procedures in accordance with 650—Chapter 23.

**20.4(3)** The dentist shall exercise supervision and shall be fully responsible for all acts performed by a dental assistant. A dentist may not delegate to a dental assistant any of the following, unless allowed pursuant to 650—Chapter 23:

- a. Diagnosis, examination, treatment planning, or prescription, including prescription for drugs and medicaments or authorization for restorative, prosthodontic or orthodontic appliances.
- b. Surgical procedures on hard and soft tissues within the oral cavity and any other intraoral procedure that contributes to or results in an irreversible alteration to the oral anatomy.
- c. Administration of local anesthesia.
- d. Placement of sealants.
- e. Removal of any plaque, stain, or hard natural or synthetic material except by toothbrush, floss, or rubber cup coronal polish, or removal of any calculus.
- f. Dental radiography, unless the assistant is qualified pursuant to 650—Chapter 22.
- g. Those procedures that require the professional judgment and skill of a dentist.

**20.4(4)** A dental assistant may perform duties consistent with these rules under the supervision of a licensed dentist. The specific duties dental assistants may perform are based upon:

- a. The education of the dental assistant.
- b. The experience of the dental assistant.

[ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15; ARC 3489C, IAB 12/6/17, effective 1/10/18; ARC 4676C, IAB 9/25/19, effective 10/30/19]

**650—20.5(153) Categories of dental assistants: dental assistant trainee, registered dental assistant.** There are two categories of dental assistants. Both the supervising dentist and the registered dental assistant or dental assistant trainee are responsible for maintaining documentation of training. Such documentation must be maintained in the office of practice and shall be provided to the board upon request.

**20.5(1) Registered dental assistant.** Registered dental assistants are individuals who have met the requirements for registration and have been issued a certificate of registration. A registered dental assistant may, under general supervision, perform dental radiography, intraoral suctioning, use of a curing light and intraoral camera, and all extraoral duties that are assigned by the dentist and are consistent with these rules. During intraoral procedures, the registered dental assistant may, under direct supervision, assist the dentist in performing duties assigned by the dentist that are consistent with these rules. The registered dental assistant may take radiographs if qualified pursuant to 650—Chapter 22.

**20.5(2) Dental assistant trainee.** Dental assistant trainees are all individuals who are engaging in on-the-job training to meet the requirements for registration and who are learning the necessary skills under the personal supervision of a licensed dentist. Trainees may also engage in on-the-job training in dental radiography pursuant to rule 650—22.3(136C,153).

*a. General requirements.* The dental assistant trainee shall meet the following requirements:

(1) Successfully complete a course of study and examination in the areas of infection control, hazardous materials, and jurisprudence. The course of study shall be prior approved by the board and sponsored by a board-approved postsecondary school.

(2) If a trainee fails to become registered by the trainee status expiration date, the trainee must stop work as a dental assistant trainee. If the trainee has not yet met the requirements for registration, the trainee may reapply for trainee status but may not work until a new dental assistant trainee status certificate has been issued by the board.

*b. Trainee restart.*

(1) Reapplying for trainee status. A trainee may “start over” as a dental assistant trainee provided the trainee submits an application in compliance with subrule 20.6(1).

(2) Examination scores valid for three years. A “repeat” trainee is not required to retake an examination (jurisprudence, infection control/hazardous materials, radiography) if the trainee has successfully passed the examination within three years of the date of application. If a trainee has failed two or more examinations, the trainee must satisfy the remedial education requirements in subrule 20.11(1). The trainee status application will not be approved until the trainee successfully completes any required remedial education.

(3) New trainee status expiration date issued. If the repeat trainee application is approved, the board office will establish a new trainee status expiration date by which registration must be completed.

(4) Maximum of two “start over” periods allowed. In addition to the initial 12-month trainee status period, a dental assistant is permitted up to two start over periods as a trainee. If a trainee seeks an additional start over period beyond two, the trainee shall submit a petition for rule waiver under 650—Chapter 7.

*c. Trainees enrolled in cooperative education or work study programs.* The requirements stated in this subrule apply to all dental assistant trainees, including a person enrolled in a cooperative education or work-study program through an Iowa high school. In addition, a trainee under 18 years of age shall not participate in dental radiography.

[ARC 0465C, IAB 11/28/12, effective 1/2/13; ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15; ARC 3489C, IAB 12/6/17, effective 1/10/18; ARC 4676C, IAB 9/25/19, effective 10/30/19]

**650—20.6(153) Registration requirements.** Effective July 2, 2001, dental assistants must meet the following requirements for registration:

**20.6(1) Dental assistant trainee.**

*a.* On or after May 1, 2013, a dentist supervising a person performing dental assistant duties must ensure that the person has been issued a trainee status certificate from the board office prior to the person’s first date of employment as a dental assistant. A dentist who has been granted a temporary permit to provide volunteer services for a qualifying event of limited duration pursuant to 650—subrule 13.3(3), or an Iowa-licensed dentist who is volunteering at such qualifying event, is exempt from this requirement for a dental assistant who is working under the dentist’s supervision at the qualifying event.

*b.* Applications for registration as a dental assistant trainee must be filed on official board forms and include the following:

(1) The fee as specified in 650—Chapter 15.

(2) Evidence of high school graduation or equivalent.

(3) Evidence the applicant is 17 years of age or older.

(4) Any additional information required by the board relating to the character and experience of the applicant as may be necessary to evaluate the applicant’s qualifications.

(5) If the applicant does not meet the requirements of (2) and (3) above, evidence that the applicant is enrolled in a cooperative education or work-study program through an Iowa high school.

*c.* Prior to the trainee status expiration date, the dental assistant trainee is required to successfully complete a board-approved course of study and examination in the areas of infection control, hazardous materials, and jurisprudence. The course of study may be taken at a board-approved postsecondary school or on the job using curriculum approved by the board for such purpose. Evidence of meeting this requirement prior to the trainee status expiration date shall be submitted by the employer dentist.

*d.* Prior to the trainee status expiration date, the dental assistant trainee's supervising dentist must ensure that the trainee has received a certificate of registration or has been issued start-over trainee status in accordance with rule 650—20.5(153) before performing any further dental assisting duties.

**20.6(2)** Registered dental assistant.

*a.* To meet this qualification, a person must:

- (1) Work in a dental office for six months as a dental assistant trainee; or
- (2) If licensed out of state, have had at least six months of prior dental assisting experience under a licensed dentist within the past two years; or
- (3) Be a graduate of an accredited dental assisting program approved by the board; and
- (4) Be a high school graduate or equivalent; and
- (5) Be 17 years of age or older.

*b.* Applications for registration as a registered dental assistant must be filed on official board forms and include the following:

- (1) The fee as specified in 650—Chapter 15.
- (2) Evidence of meeting the requirements specified in 20.6(2) “*a.*”
- (3) Evidence of successful completion of a course of study approved by the board and sponsored by a board-approved, accredited dental assisting program in the areas of infection control, hazardous materials, and jurisprudence. The course of study may be taken at a board-approved, accredited dental assisting program or on the job using curriculum approved by the board for such purpose.
- (4) Evidence of successful completion of a board-approved examination in the areas of infection control, hazardous materials, and jurisprudence.
- (5) Evidence of high school graduation or the equivalent.
- (6) Evidence the applicant is 17 years of age or older.
- (7) Evidence of meeting the qualifications of 650—Chapter 22 if engaging in dental radiography.
- (8) A statement:
  1. Confirming that the applicant possesses a valid certificate from a nationally recognized course in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) that included a “hands-on” clinical component;
  2. Providing the expiration date of the CPR certificate; and
  3. Acknowledging that the CPR certificate will be retained and made available to board office staff as part of routine auditing and monitoring.
- (9) Any additional information required by the board relating to the character, education and experience of the applicant as may be necessary to evaluate the applicant's qualifications.

**20.6(3)** All applications must be signed and verified by the applicant as to the truth of the documents and statements contained therein.

[ARC 8369B, IAB 12/16/09, effective 1/20/10; ARC 0265C, IAB 8/8/12, effective 9/12/12; ARC 0465C, IAB 11/28/12, effective 1/2/13; ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15; ARC 3489C, IAB 12/6/17, effective 1/10/18; ARC 4187C, IAB 12/19/18, effective 1/23/19; ARC 4676C, IAB 9/25/19, effective 10/30/19]

**650—20.7(153) Review of applications.** The board shall follow the procedures specified in rule 650—11.8(147,153) in reviewing applications for registration and qualification.

[ARC 4676C, IAB 9/25/19, effective 10/30/19]

**650—20.8(153) Registration denial.** The board may deny an application for registration as a dental assistant for any of the following reasons:

1. Failure to meet the requirements for registration as specified in these rules.
2. Pursuant to Iowa Code section 147.4, upon any of the grounds for which registration may be revoked or suspended as specified in 650—Chapter 30.

[ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15]

**650—20.9(147,153) Denial of registration—appeal procedure.** The board shall follow the procedures specified in 650—11.10(147) if the board proposes to deny registration to a dental assistant applicant.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code sections 147.3, 147.4 and 147.29.  
[ARC 7789B, IAB 5/20/09, effective 6/24/09; ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15]

**650—20.10(153) Examination requirements.** Beginning July 2, 2001, applicants for registration must successfully pass an examination approved by the board on infection control, hazardous waste, and jurisprudence.

**20.10(1)** Examinations approved by the board are those administered by the board or board's approved testing centers or the Dental Assisting National Board Infection Control Examination, if taken after June 1, 1991, in conjunction with the board-approved jurisprudence examination. In lieu of the board's infection control examination, the board may approve an infection control examination given by another state licensing board if the board determines that the examination is substantially equivalent to the examination administered by the board.

**20.10(2)** Information on taking the examination may be obtained by contacting the board office at 400 S.W. 8th Street, Suite D, Des Moines, Iowa 50309-4687.

**20.10(3)** An examinee must meet such other requirements as may be imposed by the board's approved dental assistant testing centers.

**20.10(4)** A dental assistant trainee must successfully pass the examination within 12 months of the first date of employment. A dental assistant trainee who does not successfully pass the examination within 12 months shall be prohibited from working as a dental assistant until the dental assistant trainee passes the examination in accordance with these rules.

**20.10(5)** A score of 75 or better on the board infection control/hazardous material exam and a score of 75 or better on the board jurisprudence exam shall be considered successful completion of the examination. The board accepts the passing standard established by the Dental Assisting National Board for applicants who take the Dental Assisting National Board Infection Control Examination.

**20.10(6)** The written examination may be waived by the board, in accordance with the board's waiver rules at 650—Chapter 7, in practice situations where the written examination is deemed to be unnecessary or detrimental to the dentist's practice.  
[ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15]

**650—20.11(153) System of retaking dental assistant examinations.**

**20.11(1)** *Second examination.*

*a.* On the second examination attempt, a dental assistant shall be required to obtain a score of 75 percent or better on each section of the examination.

*b.* A dental assistant who fails the second examination will be required to complete the remedial education requirements set forth in subrule 20.11(2).

**20.11(2)** *Third and subsequent examinations.*

*a.* Prior to the third examination attempt, a dental assistant must submit proof of additional formal education in the area of the examination failure in a program approved by the board or sponsored by a school accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association.

*b.* A dental assistant who fails the examination on the third attempt may not practice as a dental assistant in a dental office or clinic until additional remedial education approved by the board has been obtained.

*c.* For the purposes of additional study prior to retakes, the fourth or subsequent examination failure shall be considered the same as the third.

[ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15]

**650—20.12(153) Continuing education.** Each person registered as a dental assistant shall complete continuing education requirements as specified in 650—Chapter 25.

[ARC 0265C, IAB 8/8/12, effective 9/12/12; ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15; ARC 3489C, IAB 12/6/17, effective 1/10/18]

**650—20.13(252J) Receipt of certificate of noncompliance.** The board shall consider the receipt of a certificate of noncompliance of a support order from the child support recovery unit pursuant to Iowa Code chapter 252J and 650—Chapter 33. Registration denial or denial of renewal of registration shall follow the procedures in the statutes and board rules as set forth in this rule.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code chapter 252J.

[ARC 0265C, IAB 8/8/12, effective 9/12/12; ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15; ARC 4747C, IAB 11/6/19, effective 12/11/19]

**650—20.14(153) Unlawful practice.** A dental assistant who assists a dentist in practicing dentistry in any capacity other than as a person supervised by a dentist in a dental office, or who directly or indirectly procures a licensed dentist to act as nominal owner, proprietor or director of a dental office as a guise or subterfuge to enable such dental assistant to engage directly or indirectly in the practice of dentistry, or who performs dental service directly or indirectly on or for members of the public other than as a person working for a dentist shall be deemed to be practicing dentistry without a license.

[ARC 0265C, IAB 8/8/12, effective 9/12/12; ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15]

**650—20.15(153) Advertising and soliciting of dental services prohibited.** Dental assistants shall not advertise, solicit, represent or hold themselves out in any manner to the general public that they will furnish, construct, repair or alter prosthetic, orthodontic or other appliances, with or without consideration, to be used as substitutes for or as part of natural teeth or associated structures or for the correction of malocclusions or deformities, or that they will perform any other dental service.

[ARC 0265C, IAB 8/8/12, effective 9/12/12; ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15]

**650—20.16(153) Public health supervision allowed.** A dentist may provide public health supervision to a registered dental assistant if the dentist has an active Iowa license and the services are provided in a public or private school, public health agencies, hospitals, or the armed forces.

**20.16(1) Public health agencies defined.** For the purposes of this rule, public health agencies include programs operated by federal, state, or local public health departments.

**20.16(2) Responsibilities.** When working together in a public health supervision relationship, a dentist and registered dental assistant shall enter into a written agreement that specifies the following responsibilities.

*a.* The dentist providing public health supervision must:

- (1) Be available to provide communication and consultation with the registered dental assistant;
- (2) Have age- and procedure-specific standing orders for the performance of services. Those standing orders must include consideration for medically compromised patients and medical conditions for which a dental evaluation must occur prior to the provision of services;
- (3) Specify a period of time in which an examination by a dentist must occur prior to providing further services;
- (4) Specify the location or locations where the services will be provided under public health supervision.

*b.* A registered dental assistant providing services under public health supervision may only provide services which are limited to all extraoral duties, dental radiography, intraoral suctioning, and use of a curing light and intraoral camera and must:

- (1) Maintain contact and communication with the dentist providing public health supervision;
- (2) Practice according to age- and procedure-specific standing orders as directed by the supervising dentist, unless otherwise directed by the dentist for a specific patient;
- (3) Ensure that the patient, parent, or guardian receives a written plan for referral to a dentist;
- (4) Ensure that each patient, parent, or guardian signs a consent form that notifies the patient that the services that will be received do not take the place of regular dental checkups at a dental office and are meant for people who otherwise would not have access to services; and
- (5) Ensure that a procedure is in place for creating and maintaining dental records for the patients who are treated, including where these records are to be located.

c. The written agreement for public health supervision must be maintained by the dentist and the registered dental assistant and a copy filed with the board office within 30 days of the date on which the dentist and the registered dental assistant entered into the agreement. The dentist and registered dental assistant must review the agreement at least biennially.

d. The registered dental assistant shall file annually with the supervising dentist and the bureau of oral and health delivery systems a report detailing the number of patients seen, the services provided to patients and the infection control protocols followed at each practice location.

e. A copy of the written agreement for public health supervision shall be filed with the Bureau of Oral and Health Delivery Systems, Iowa Department of Public Health, Lucas State Office Building, 321 E. 12th Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.

**20.16(3) Reporting requirements.** Each registered dental assistant who has rendered services under public health supervision must complete a summary report at the completion of a program or, in the case of an ongoing program, at least annually. The report shall be filed with the bureau of oral and health delivery systems of the Iowa department of public health on forms provided by the department and shall include information related to the number of patients seen and services provided so that the department may assess the impact of the program. The department will provide summary reports to the board on an annual basis.

[ARC 2028C, IAB 6/10/15, effective 7/15/15]

**650—20.17(153) Students enrolled in dental assisting programs.** Students enrolled in an accredited dental assisting program are not considered to be engaged in the unlawful practice of dental assisting provided that such practice is in connection with their regular course of instruction and meets the following:

1. The practice of clinical skills on peers enrolled in the same program must be under the direct supervision of a program instructor with an active Iowa dental assistant registration, Iowa dental hygiene license, Iowa faculty permit, or Iowa dental license;

2. The practice of clinical skills on members of the public must be under the direct supervision of a dentist with an active Iowa dental license.

[ARC 2593C, IAB 6/22/16, effective 7/27/16]

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code chapter 153.

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<sup>1</sup> The Administrative Rules Review Committee at their May 21, 1979, meeting delayed the effective date of Chapters 20 and 21 70 days.