

DENTAL HYGIENE COMPETENCY STATEMENTS

I. **PROFESSIONALISM:** The dental hygienist must be able to provide clinical care using contemporary professional knowledge, judgment and skills. The dental hygiene practitioner must be capable of discerning and managing ethical issues in the practice of dental hygiene. They must be prepared to practice in a rapidly changing environment, where therapy and ethical issues are influenced by advances in science and technology, regulatory action, economics, social policy, cultural diversity and health care delivery systems. Additionally, as dental hygiene tries to create a unique identity for the profession and increase its knowledge base, the dental hygienist must be able to understand and apply diverse information to practice in this dynamic environment.

1. Ethics. The new dental hygiene graduate must be able to discern and manage the ethical issues of dental hygiene practice in a rapidly changing environment.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

- 1.1 Apply a professional code of ethics and practice with personal and professional integrity.
- 1.2 Serve all individuals and the community without discrimination.
- 1.3 Respect the cultural differences of the population.
- 1.4 Provide humane and compassionate care to all patients/ clients.
- 1.5 Maintain honesty in relationships with patients/clients, colleagues and other professionals.
- 1.6 Ensure the privacy of the patient/client during dental hygiene treatment and counseling and maintain confidentiality of patient records.
- 1.7 Comply with all state and federal laws governing the practice of dentistry and dental hygiene.
- 1.8 Use current infection control procedures in all aspects of patient/client treatment.
- 1.9 Take action against the incompetent and unethical colleague; assist and direct the impaired colleague.
- 1.10 Teach patients/clients to value the delivery of competent care by dental professionals.

2. Information Processing. The new dental hygiene graduate must be able to acquire and synthesize information in a critical, scientific, and effective manner.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

- 2.1 Accept responsibility for solving problems and making decisions based on

accepted
scientific principles.

- 2.2 Critically analyze published reports of oral health research and apply this information to the evidence – based practice of dental hygiene.
 - 2.3 Evaluate and/or apply published data on the safety and efficacy of oral health products and treatments
 - 2.4 Communicate professional knowledge orally and in writing.
 - 2.5 Employ the principles of scientific writing.
Use sound judgment in processing information, professional decision making
 - 2.6 and application
of new information to patient/client care.
 - 2.7 Use computer technology to access and share information.
3. Professional Socialization. The new dental hygiene graduate must contribute to improving the knowledge, skills, and values of the profession.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

- 3.1 Advance the profession through service activities and affiliation with professional organizations.
- 3.2 Expand and contribute to the knowledge base of dental hygiene.
- 3.3 Participate in the roles of the profession including clinician, educator, researcher, change agent, consumer advocate, administrator.
- 3.4 Promote the values of the profession to the public and other organizations both within and outside of the dental profession.
- 3.5 Assume responsibility for self-assessment, for life long learning and professional growth.
- 3.6 Function as a member of dental and other health care teams.
- 3.7 Identify career goals, secure practice or other dental hygiene positions and direct personal career development.
- 3.8 Participate in quality assurance programs for oral health services.

II. HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE PREVENTION

The dental hygienist serves the community in both private and public health settings. Public health, which is concerned with promoting health and preventing disease through organized community efforts, is an important component of any interdisciplinary approach. In the practice setting, the dental hygienist plays an active role in the promotion of optimal oral health and its relationship to general

health. The dental hygienist, therefore, must be competent in the performance and delivery of oral health promotion and disease prevention services in private practice, public health and other alternative settings.

4. The Individual. The new dental hygiene graduate must be able to provide planned educational services using appropriate interpersonal communication skills and educational strategies to promote optimal health.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

- 4.1 Promote preventive health behaviors by personally striving to maintain optimal oral and general health.
- 4.2 Incorporate a wellness philosophy that promotes healthy lifestyles for staff and patients/clients into the practice of dental hygiene and/ or the workplace.
- 4.3 Identify the oral health needs of individuals and assist them in the development of appropriate and individualized self-care regimens.
- 4.4 Encourage patients/clients to assume responsibility for their health and promote adherence to self-care regimens.

5. The Community. The new dental hygiene graduate must be able to initiate and assume responsibility for health promotion and disease prevention activities for diverse populations.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

- 5.1 Identify services that promote oral health and prevent oral disease and related conditions.
- 5.2 Participate in the assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation phases of community-based oral health programs.
- 5.3 Participate in the public policy process in order to influence consumer groups, businesses and government agencies to support health care issues.
- 5.4 Use screening, referral and education to bring consumers into the health care delivery system.
- 5.5 Provide dental hygiene services in a variety of settings including hospitals, clinics, offices, hospices, extended care facilities, HMO's, community programs and schools.
- 5.6 Develop a perspective of dental hygiene's relationship to the overall health care system.
- 5.7 Develop a commitment to serving the public through professional and personal community service activities.

III. PROCESS OF CARE The dental hygienist is a licensed preventive oral health professional who provides educational and clinical services in the support of optimal oral health. The dental hygiene process of care applies principles from the biomedical, clinical and social sciences to diverse populations of all ages that may include the medically compromised, mentally or physically challenged, and socially or culturally disadvantaged.

6. Assessment. The new dental hygiene graduate must be able to systematically collect, analyze and accurately record baseline data on the general, oral and psychosocial health status of patients/clients using methods consistent with medicolegal principles.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

- 6.1 Obtain, review and update a complete medical, family, psychological, and dental history, including assessment of vital signs.
- 6.2 Recognize the patient/client record as a legal document and maintain its accuracy, consistency and confidentiality.
- 6.3 Recognize medical conditions that require special precautions or consideration prior to or during dental hygiene treatment.
- 6.4 Identify the patient at risk for a medical emergency, take steps to prevent an emergency and be prepared to manage an emergency should it occur during an appointment.
- 6.5 Perform an extraoral and intraoral examination and accurately record the findings.
- 6.6 Perform an examination of the teeth and accurately record the results.
- 6.7 Obtain radiographs of diagnostic quality.
- 6.8 Distinguish normal from abnormal radiographic findings and correlate those findings with clinical exam data.
- 6.9 Evaluate the periodontium, record findings and identify conditions that compromise periodontal health and function.
- 6.10 Identify factors and disorders that affect dietary intake and food selection, and recognize risks and benefits of alternative food patterns.
- 6.11 Provide additional assessment data, including diagnostic tests for caries and periodontal diseases; study models; and vitality testing.

7. Diagnosis.*The new dental hygiene graduate must be able to use critical decision making skills to reach conclusions about patient/client's dental hygiene needs based on the assessment data.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

- 7.1 Use assessment findings, etiologic and risk factors, and clinical data to determine a dental hygiene diagnosis.
- 7.2 Identify significant findings that impact on the delivery of dental hygiene services.
- 7.3 Obtain consultations as indicated.

*Note: As defined in the dental hygiene literature the “dental hygiene diagnosis” identifies patient needs that direct dental hygiene care. This does not preclude the dental diagnosis.

8. Planning. The new dental hygiene graduate must be able to discuss the condition of the oral cavity, identified and potential problems, etiological factors and risk assessment, and design a patient-centered treatment/care plan.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

- 8.1 Analyze patient data to formulate a dental hygiene care/treatment plan which is based on a statement of problems or potential problems related to oral health and disease that may be addressed by dental hygiene services and that is congruent with treatment plans by the dentist and other health professionals
- 8.2 Suggest the need for consult/referral to appropriate health care professionals.
- 8.3 Establish oral health goals with the patient/client, family and/or guardian as an active participant.
- 8.4 Establish a planned sequence of educational and clinical dental hygiene services using a problem-based and patient-centered approach.
- 8.5 Communicate the plan for dental hygiene services to the dentist or other interdisciplinary health team members to determine its congruence with the overall plan for systemic and/or oral health care.
- 8.6 Obtain informed consent from the patient/client prior to implementing services.

9. Implementation. The new dental hygiene graduate must be able to provide treatment that includes preventive and therapeutic services designed to achieve and maintain oral health and assist the patient/client in achieving oral health goals.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

- 9.1 Apply basic and advanced principles of dental hygiene instrumentation to remove deposits

without trauma to hard or soft tissue.

- 9.2 Control pain and anxiety during treatment through the use of legally accepted clinical techniques and appropriate behavioral management strategies.
 - 9.3 Select and administer appropriate chemotherapeutic agents within the scope of dental hygiene practice.
 - 9.4 Provide pre- and post-treatment instructions when appropriate.
 - 9.5 Provide all dental hygiene services that can be performed legally in the state of Maryland.
 - 9.6 Discuss dental hygiene services that may be provided legally in other states.
 - 9.7 Use measures to minimize occupational hazards in the work place.
 - 9.8 Involve the patient/client actively throughout the treatment.
10. Evaluation. The new dental hygiene graduate must be able to evaluate the effectiveness of planned clinical and educational services and modify them as necessary.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

- 10.1 Determine the clinical outcomes of dental hygiene interventions using indices, instruments and examination techniques.
- 10.2 Determine the patient's/client's satisfaction with the dental hygiene care received and the oral health status achieved.
- 10.3 Develop and maintain a recall/continuing care system appropriate to the practice setting and individual patient/client needs.
- 10.4 Provide referrals for additional patient/client treatment as needed.

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