

Dental Hygiene Core Competencies

Dental hygienists must exhibit competence in the following identified learning domains:

Core Competencies

- Provide quality assurance mechanisms for health services.
- Communicate effectively with individuals and groups from diverse populations both verbally and in writing.
- Provide accurate, consistent, and complete documentation for assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation of dental hygiene services.
- Provide care to all clients using an individualized approach that is humane, empathetic, and caring.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

- Promote the values of oral and general health and wellness to the public and organizations within and outside the profession.
- Respect the goals, values, beliefs, and preferences of the patient/client while promoting optimal oral and general health.
- Refer patients/clients who may have a physiologic, psychological, and/or social problem for comprehensive patient/client evaluation.
- Identify individual and population risk factors and develop strategies that promote health related quality of life.
- Evaluate factors that can be used to promote patient/client adherence to disease prevention and/or health maintenance strategies.
- Evaluate and utilize methods to ensure the health and safety of the patient/client and the dental hygienist in the delivery of dental hygiene.

Community Involvement

- Assess the oral health needs of the community and the quality and availability of re- sources and services.
- Provide screening, referral, and educational services that allow clients to access the re- sources of the health care system.

- Provide community oral health services in a variety of settings.
- Facilitate client access to oral health services by influencing individuals and/or organizations for the provision of oral health care.
- Apply a professional code of ethics in all endeavors.
- Adhere to state and federal laws, recommendations, and regulations in the provision of dental hygiene care.
- Provide dental hygiene care to promote patient/client health and wellness using critical thinking and problem solving in the provision of evidence-based practice.
- Use evidence-based decision making to evaluate and incorporate emerging treatment modalities.
- Assume responsibility for dental hygiene actions and care based on accepted scientific theories and research as well as the accepted standard of care.
- Continuously perform self-assessment for life- long learning and professional growth.
- Promote the profession through service activities and affiliations with professional organizations.
- Evaluate reimbursement mechanisms and their impact on the patient's/client's access to oral health care.
- Evaluate the outcomes of community-based programs and plan for future activities.

Patient/Client Care

- Systematically collect, analyze, and record data on the general, oral, and psychosocial health status of a variety of patients/clients using methods consistent with medico-legal principles.
- Use critical decision making skills to reach conclusions about the patient's/client's dental hygiene needs based on all available assessment data.
- Collaborate with the patient/client, and/or other health professionals, to formulate a comprehensive dental hygiene care plan that is patient/client-centered and based on current scientific evidence.
- Provide specialized treatment that includes preventive and therapeutic services designed to achieve and maintain oral health. Assist in achieving oral health goals formulated in collaboration with the patient/client.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented clinical, preventive, and educational services and modify as needed.

Professional Growth and Development

- Identify career options within health care, industry, education, and research and evaluate the feasibility of pursuing dental hygiene opportunities.
- Develop practice management and marketing strategies to be used in the delivery of oral health care.
- Access professional and social networks to pursue professional goals.