
Educational qualifications of becoming a dental assistant

For a student looking into a career with strong communication skills, who enjoys science, and is people-oriented, employment as a dental assistant is recommended for an individual with these interests and talents. Dentists need assistants to organize materials and instruments, to x-ray and provide other specialized dental services and to play a major role in offering comfort to patients before and after the treatment. A dental assistant career serves as an appropriate future for an individual interested in a hands-on, customer-oriented, and peaceful work environment.

In order for a student to become a dental assistant they need to extend their education after high school. Therefore, it is recommended that a high school student planning for a career in dental assistantship take certain classes that will help them. "During high school the student should take Computer Fundamentals, Health Education, and Safety and First Aid" ("Dental Assistants"). After high school, "Most students get their education through a community college, vocational schools, technical institutes, and universities" ("American Dental Association"). When the student is taking classes for their career as a dental assistant they should take courses in health, biology and chemistry. Most dental assistant programs take up to eleven months. However, the least amount of time to usually complete a dental assistant program is nine months. With that being said, "In a two-year program at community and technical colleges, students can obtain an associate's degree" ("Resse"). After completing and taking these classes, the dental assistant will have to take an examination that evaluates knowledge in order to become a certified dental assistant. "Most dental assistants who chose to become nationally certified take the Dental Assisting National Board's (DANB), or the Certified Dental Assistant examination (CDA)" ("American Dental Association"). It is highly recommended for a student to take the examination, as it will help them later on with their career. Education is very important in the career of a dental assistant. The more education the student gets, the higher the chance for them to get a job.

Students looking towards a dental career must demonstrate superior communication skills, are reasonable at solving problems, can manage themselves, and work well with others. Most dental assistants need to have most of these skills in order to be able to listen to patients' questions, and be able to express ideas clearly. A dental assistant should be able to combine several pieces of information, draw a conclusion, and notice when another co-worker is doing something wrong with the patient. A dental assistant should be able to stay concentrated and not get distracted while learning new information by studying and working with them. While working with either a co-worker or a patient, the dental assistant should be able to find ways to help and persuade them into trying new things. The dental assistant should also be "aware of

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others' reaction and understand why they react as they do" ("Dental Assistant Job Description - Part 1."). Teaching is one of the most valuable skills a dental assistant can possess since they will have to teach the proper hygiene to the patient. The skills and qualification most dental assistant careers include are communication, teamwork, and problem solving.

A dental assistant's job mostly consists of preparing the patients before they go in for their dental examinations, and after they complete the examination. "A dental assistant may be found working in the office, the laboratory or at the side of the dentist" ("Resse"). They are also in charge of handing the dentist the proper instruments, and having the patient's dental records at hand. Not only does the dental assistant prepare the patients for examinations, they comfort the patients if needed. Very often before the patient goes in for treatment, the dental assistant will ask the patient about dental health. The dental assistant teaches proper hygiene for teeth care. Many times after the patient gets done with their examination, the dental assistant will be in charge of getting the patients next visit scheduled. Not only does the dental assistant assist the dentist by passing them the instruments during an examination., the dental assistant also is in charge of answering any questions that the patients have, sterilizing the instruments and making sure they are placed at easy access, preparing the room where the examination will take place in, and making sure to schedule the patients' next visit. A dental assistant also has additional duties as a part of their job in addition to their regular duties. "A dental assistant can also apply local dental anesthetic, they can clean teeth, apply dental sealant, and fluoride" ("Dental Assistant Job Description & Duties"). Not only does the dental assistant have responsibilities in the examination room with the dentist, but sufficient in the laboratory too. "Others may have laboratory duties that include making casts of the teeth or temporary crowns" ("Resse"). A dental assistant does not only assist the dentist in the examination room. The assistant has many duties from cleaning patients' teeth to making caskets of the teeth.

Dental offices offer comfortable, indoor environments for working. However, a dental assistant does not have much room to work in, therefore they work in very little spaces and are near other people at all times. A dental assistant wears protective clothing to prevent exposure to disease, X-rays and radiation. At times they have to make decisions that will affect people around them. They can work either part-time or full-time. Sometimes, they move often so they do not stay in the same dental office and will work in various locations. Some dental offices work evenings and Saturdays to get longer hours, so a dental assistant might have to work at those times too.

The salary of a dental assistant depends a lot on where they are located, education, and experience. "Dental assistants earn salaries equal to other health care personnel with similar training and experience such as medical assistants, physical therapy assistants, occupational therapy assistants, veterinary technicians and pharmacy assistants" ("American Dental Association"). The median pay for a dental assistant annually is usually around thirty four thousand five hundred. However, in Oklahoma the median pay is twenty nine thousand three

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hundred ninety. There are many reasons on why a dental assistant's salary varies. "Location affects dental assistant salaries more than most other factors" ("Dental Assistant Job Description & Duties"). Along with location affecting the salary, training affects salary as well because employers are willing to offer a higher salary in order to make their opportunity more attractive. Getting a dental certification also plays a big role in a dental assistants' salary. Certified dental assistants are usually always in a higher demand than those who are not certified, therefore employers are willing to pay a higher wage. If a dental assistant wants to raise their salary, they should get a higher education, become certified, and gain more experience.

The benefits of a dental assistant can depend on the formal training. "The skills and background education received during training makes dental assistant program graduates more attractive to employers, and also gives them the foundation to move into other areas of healthcare if so desired" ("Dental Assistant Job Description & Duties"). Many dental assistants also have the benefit of choosing whether they want to work full-time or part-time. Not many careers offer this option. Most dental assistant offices are very flexible with time schedules among the workers. "Others divide their schedules among more than one dental office" ("About Dental Assisting"). The growth for dental assistants has been very strong over the last couple of years. It has been shown that employment of dental assistant has grown much faster than the average for most all other occupations. Therefore, the job availability will be greater and it will be easier for a student looking for a job as a dental assistant to get hired by a dentist. As a result of the new health care regulations, more people are being able to have dental coverage. Therefore, dentists are in need of more dental assistants. "Dentists will continue to hire more dental assistants to complete routine tasks, allowing the dentist to see more patients in their practice and to spend their time on more complex procedures" ("Summary"). Over the last couple of years more and more people have gone to get their teeth checked, therefore a dentist will be in need of more assisting. The more skills and education a dental student gets, they are at a higher chance of benefits and job availability.

In order to become a dental assistant it does not take much education, although the salary of a dental assistant depends on their education. The career as a dental assistant has grown dramatically over the last couple of years. Therefore, it is easier now for a student to embrace dental assistant as their career to get a job. A student who wants to endure in their education, has superior communication skills, and enjoys working with their hands should consider dental assistantship as their career.

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