

Dental Assistant Framework

What is a Dental Assistant?

Dental assisting is a popular career choice for many reasons, including job stability, quick entry to the workforce and the ability to help others. Whether scheduling appointments, taking X-rays or assisting dentists with routine or specialized procedures, dental assistants must have great levels of skill and attention to detail.

<https://www.learnhowtobecome.org/dental-assistant/>

Below is a small chart that briefly outlines a broad introduction to the dental field. Dental Assisting-specific information can be found later in the framework. The information is organized by grade level – which allows the educator to introduce the information to the student in *small, appropriate increments*.

<u>Programs and Professions</u>			
What professions and programs are there in dentistry?			
9th	10th	11th	12th
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the levels within the dental profession <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dental Assisting ○ Dental Hygiene ○ Dentist ○ Dental Specialists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the differences between each level of dentistry • Introduce high school dental programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of schools & what programs they offer • Length of Programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Statistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Salary ○ Job Growth

Ninth Grade

- **What are the levels within the dental profession?**
 - There are a few different professions within the dental field. It begins with a dental assistant, followed by a dental hygienist, a dentist, and finally, a dental specialist - if the dentist chooses to specialize. Dentists may specialize in any of the ten dental specialties currently adopted by the American Dental Association. Some of these specialties include orthodontics and oral surgery.
- <https://www.ada.org/en/ncrdscb/dental-specialties/specialty-definitions>

Tenth Grade

- **What are the differences between each level in dentistry? What do these professionals do?**
 - *Dental Assistant:* A dental assistant provides hands-on help for the dentist. The dental assistant performs preparatory work such as sterilizing

equipment, preparing and developing x-rays, and taking impressions/molds of patients' teeth. Additionally, they guide the patients through their procedures and instruct patients on oral care.

<https://www.ada.org/en/education-careers/careers-in-dentistry/dental-team-careers/dental-assistant>

- *Dental Hygienist:* A dental hygienists work duties include performing dental cleanings, examining patients for signs of oral diseases (cancer screenings and gingivitis), and providing preventative dental care under the supervision of a dentist. They also educate patients on ways to improve oral health.
<https://www.ada.org/en/education-careers/careers-in-dentistry/dental-team-careers/dental-hygienist>
- *Dentist:* Dentists provide a lot of services for the continued oral health of their patients, focusing on preventing and stopping diseases through regular examinations. General dentists diagnose and treat patients, potentially offering more advanced treatments, such as bridgework, fitting for dentures, cavity fillings, and root canals — or referring the patient to specialized dentists.
<https://www.ada.org/en/about-the-ada/dentists-doctors-of-oral-health>
<https://www.ada.org/en/education-careers/dental-student-resources/career-options-after-dental-school/understanding-advanced-dental-education/program-options-and-descriptions>
- *Dental Specialists:* Dental specialists are dentists who receive additional training in a specific dental specialty, beyond their general dentistry degree. There are 10 official dental specialties recognized by the American Dental Association. The two most common are Oral Surgeons and Orthodontists.
<https://www.ada.org/en/about-the-ada/dentists-doctors-of-oral-health>
- **Are there any dental-related programs available to high school students?**
 - There are a few school districts within the Rio Grande Valley that offer a dental assisting certification program to their high school students. These students will be given the means and have the opportunity to become a registered dental assistant by the time they graduate. If they pass the certification exam and are approved by the state board, when the student graduates high school, they are immediately able to enter the workforce

and apply for a job as a dental assistant. It is important to introduce this option to students during their *sophomore year, or sooner*, so they can take full advantage of the programs that may start their junior or senior year. More information about these specific school districts and their programs can be found below:

- **South Texas I.S.D.**

- South Texas I.S.D. has two sister schools that offer a dental assisting program at the high school level. This certification program is typically taken during the students' junior and senior years. By the time the student is graduating high school, they are also certified dental assistants.

medicalprofessions.stisd.net/students/health_science_certification_programs/State_And_National_Dental_Programs_medhigh.stisd.net/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6077817/File/2019-2020%20Med%20High%20Course%20Sequence.pdf

- **Harlingen C.I.S.D.**

- The Harlingen High School for Health Professions has 6 schools of study - one of which includes dental assisting. This program also takes place during the students' final years of high school, and they typically graduate high school with a dental assisting certification.

https://hshp.hcisid.org/apps/classes/show_class.jsp?classREC_ID=904379

- **PSJA I.S.D.**

- PSJA offers a dental assisting program for their students. This certification is typically achieved during their senior year of high school. <https://cai.psjaisd.us/About>

Eleventh Grade

- **What are the types of schools the student can attend?**

- Technical schools
 - Technical schools, also known as “vocational schools,” offer targeted, shorter instruction at a lower tuition, or cost, leading to a certificate or an associate’s degree. Many technical schools in Texas offer dual enrollment opportunities for high school students. <https://scitexas.edu/technical-school/>
- Community College
 - A community college is an institution that offers short term certificates or two-year associate’s degrees. Associate’s degrees

transfer and often lead to four-year degrees at partnering universities. Many community colleges in Texas offer dual enrollment opportunities for high school students. They typically offer less expensive education than four-year universities. Most community colleges have open enrollment, meaning there are very few requirements for admission.

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2012/03/what-is-community-college>

- College
 - A college is a four-year institution that offers degrees in specific areas of study (i.e. medicine or law). These degrees can lead to graduate or professional school. Colleges may have open enrollment or may have strict admission requirements.
<https://www.trade-schools.net/articles/college-vs-university.asp#university>
- University
 - A University is a four-year institution that offers many different degrees through multiple “colleges” located on the same campus. Typically, a university may have a “College of Education” or a “College of Health Sciences”. Universities also usually offer graduate (Master’s, Doctorates) and professional degrees. Typically, universities have strict admission requirements that include grades, placements tests, and admissions tests like the SAT/ACT.
<https://www.trade-schools.net/articles/college-vs-university.asp#university>
- **What types of school does a student need to attend for the dental assisting program? How long is this program?**
 - *Dental Assistant:*
 - Dental assisting certification programs are primarily offered at technical/vocational schools and community colleges. However, there are some universities that offer these programs as well.
 - This program can take anywhere from a few months up to a year and a half to complete.
<https://www.chcp.edu/locations/mcallen-texas-campus/dental-assistant-certificate>

Twelfth Grade

- **What is the salary and expected job growth for a dental assistant?**
 - Dental Assistant
 - The average hourly wage for a dental assistant is \$18.59 per hour. The average annual wage is \$38,660. The projected job growth is

11% over a 10-year period.

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dental-assistants.htm>

<u>Academic Pathway</u>			
How can I prepare to become a dental assistant?			
9th	10th	11th	12th
• GPA Awareness	• Dual Enrollment	• Relevant Coursework	• Know Your Learning Style

- **Ninth Grade**

- **What is your GPA and does it matter?**

- A GPA, or Grade Point Average, is typically a 4-point scale that will reflect a student's academic performance.
- It is extremely crucial that a student understands that the GPA that begins accumulating their freshman year of high school, will be with them for the rest of their lives. Keeping their GPA as high as possible is very important. Not only do colleges and universities look at a GPA when accepting or denying an applicant, hiring committees for job openings look at this too.

<https://www.crimsoneducation.org/us/blog/average-gpa-ivy-league>

- **Tenth Grade**

- **What courses should a student consider taking in order to become a dental assistant?**

- A student interested in the dental field can best prepare by participating in a dual enrollment program while in high school. Dual enrollment is when students enroll in college courses, while still in high school, to earn college credit prior to graduating from high school. These courses are applied toward both high school and college graduation and can usually be transferred to other colleges or universities. Dual enrollment procedures and transferring abilities can and will vary from state to state and college to college.
- The benefits of participating in a dual enrollment program in high school are numerous. Taking dual enrollment courses allow the student to transition from high school to post-secondary-level coursework more easily. The student can get a taste of what college is without being overwhelmed with a whole new environment. It provides high school students with a wider range of courses so that they have the opportunity to explore different fields

before they declare a major or enter a program. Dual enrollment courses also offer an opportunity for students who are not able or do not qualify to take AP classes, to show a more rigorous course load on their transcripts. Finally, one of the biggest benefits that dual enrollment offers is the amount of money and time the student will be saving overall.

- Students who participate in dual enrollment courses in high school, can be farther ahead in their goals of moving up within the dental field than those who do not. If they choose to move up within the dental field by becoming a dental hygienist or dentist, they will already have core pre-requisites out of the way.

<https://collegegrad.com/careers/dental-assistants>

- **Eleventh Grade**

- **What dual enrollment courses can be relevant to dentistry?**

- CORE CURRICULUM COURSES

- Mathematics (College Algebra) 3-4 credit hours
 - Life and Physical Sciences (Biology) 8 credit hours
 - Creative Arts (Art/Music) 3 credit hours

- ACADEMIC TRANSFERABLE COURSES

- Biology for Science Majors I 4 credit hours
 - Biology for Science Majors II 4 credit hours
 - Anatomy and Physiology I 4 credit hours
 - Anatomy and Physiology II 4 credit hours
 - General Chemistry I 4 credit hours
 - General Chemistry II 4 credit hours
 - College Algebra 4 credit hours
 - Elementary Statistical Methods 4 credit hours
 - Pre-Calculus Math 4 credit hours
 - Calculus I 4 credit hours
 - Calculus II 4 credit hours
 - Calculus III 4 credit hours

<https://www.southtexascollege.edu/dual/dual-courses.html>

- **Twelfth Grade**

- **How else can a student prepare for a job as a dental assistant?**

- Study. Study. Study. When a student goes through a dental assisting program, they will have to pass a licensing exam to ensure they are ready to practice in an office. It is crucial that a student knows what studying style is best for them in order to succeed.

<https://collegepuzzle.stanford.edu/knowning-your-learning-style-can-help-college-success/>

<u>Admissions</u>			
What do I need in order to apply for a dental assistant program?			
9th	10th	11th	12th
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dental Assisting Program Summary Programs in RGV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length of program Program Cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admission Requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing Education (CE)

- Ninth Grade**

- What does a dental assisting program entail?**

- A dental assistant program will cover key areas and topics exposing the student to both classroom and hands-on instruction. The classroom instruction reviews the necessary anatomy, terminology, legal and ethical issues as well as the policy and guidelines necessary to understanding the scope of practice and the practical aspects of dental assisting. Topics include instrument identification, equipment maintenance, tooth structure, oral cavity anatomy, dental anesthesia, sterilization, tooth charting, restorations, bridge implants, mixing of dental cement, and x-ray techniques (bitewing, panograph, and peripheral). The student will learn the steps necessary to assist a dentist while providing quality dental care within the community.

<https://www.utrgv.edu/ce/programs/certificate-programs/dental-assistant-program/index.htm>

- Where can a student apply and attend a dental assistant program?**

- A student can visit the following websites to look for a program nearest to them. In the Rio Grande Valley, a student can attend a dental assistant program at:

CHCP in McAllen <https://www.chcp.edu/degrees-certificates/on-campus/dental-assistant-program/>

STVT in McAllen, Weslaco, Brownsville, or Corpus Christi,
<https://www.stvt.edu/career-training-programs/healthcare/dental-assisting/>

UTRGV in Edinburg,
<https://www.utrgv.edu/ce/programs/healthcare-and-fitness/dental-assistant/index.htm>

- **Tenth Grade**

- **What is the length of the dental assisting program?**

- At CHCP, the length of the dental assistant program is 35 weeks long on the Day Track and 54 weeks long on the Evening Track.
<https://www.chcp.edu/degrees-certificates/on-campus/dental-assistant-program/>
 - At STVT, you can find the length of their program at each location by requesting more information at <https://www.stvt.edu/career-training-programs/healthcare/dental-assisting/>
 - At UTRGV, the length of the dental assistant program is a total of 100 hours long. It takes place on Saturdays from 9:00AM – 4:30PM.
<https://www.utrgv.edu/ce/programs/certificate-programs/dental-assistant-program/index.htm>

- **What is the cost of the dental assisting program?**

- At CHCP, the total cost of the dental assisting program is estimated to be about \$17,000.
<https://www.chcp.edu/sites/default/files/content/documents/campus/Addenda%20BOOKLET%20MCA%20-%20CHCP%20%282019-06-26%29.pdf>
 - A student can inquire with STVT directly to find the total cost of the dental assisting program. <https://www.stvt.edu/career-training-programs/healthcare/dental-assisting/>
 - The total cost of the dental assisting program at UTRGV comes out to \$1,799. Not included in the tuition fee, is a potential \$425 Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) exam requested by the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB).

<https://www.utrgv.edu/ce/programs/certificate-programs/dental-assistant-program/index.htm>

- **Eleventh Grade**

- **What are the admission requirements for the dental assisting program?**
 - At CHCP, students must have or plan to receive a high school diploma/GED, must also possess the ability to read and write in English, and a grade of at least a 10 on the Wonderlic SLE assessment. <https://www.chcp.edu/degrees-certificates/on-campus/dental-assistant-program/>
 - A student can inquire with STVT directly to find the admission requirements for their program. <https://www.stvt.edu/career-training-programs/healthcare/dental-assisting/>
 - At UTRGV, students must have or plan to receive a high school diploma/GED, must also possess a minimum of 10th grade math and reading skills, and must be at least 18 years old to sit for the national certification exam after completing this course. <https://www.utrgv.edu/ce/programs/certificate-programs/dental-assistant-program/index.htm>

- **Twelfth Grade**

- **What is required of a dental assistant?**
 - In order to maintain their certification, a dental assistant must take a specific amount continuing education (CE) courses every year. Continuing education courses are classes for professionals that introduce or explain new methods of treatment for their job. These courses are required so that professionals can stay up to date with new technology and professional advances. The number of courses that are required vary by state. <https://www.allalliedhealthschools.com/dental-assisting/dental-assistant-certification/>
- A dental assistant must complete six (6) hours of continuing education each year in areas covering dental assistant duties. At least three (3) of these six (6) hours must be clinical continuing education.

- Up to six (6) hours of CE may be carried forward from the years preceding the renewal period.
- All CE hours must be provided by a board approved provider listed in Rule §104.2
- CE can be self-study, interactive computer courses, or classroom lecture courses.
- As part of the 12-hour requirement, a course in human trafficking prevention approved by the executive commissioner of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission must be completed. Click [here](#) for a list of approved courses.

○ **How can a student become a better job applicant once they have become a dental assistant?**

- There are certifications that a dental assistant can complete on top of their dental assisting certification in order to advance their credentials, expand their knowledge, and increase their pay. A few of these certifications include:

- Certified Orthodontic Assistant
- Preventive Functions Dental Assistant
- Certified Restorative Functions Dental Assistant
- Nitrous Oxide Monitoring Certification
- Coronal Polish (CP) Certification

<https://www.allalliedhealthschools.com/dental-assisting/dental-assistant-certification/>

<https://www.dalefoundation.org/Resources-And-State-Requirements/State-Dental-Assistant-Requirements/Texas>