

COMPETENCIES FOR ENTRY INTO THE PROFESSION OF DENTAL HYGIENE

Introduction

Competence is an acceptable, measurable defined level of special skill and knowledge derived from education, experience, role modeling and overall socialization. To be competent, an entry level dental hygienist must perform at or above the acceptable defined standard.

Domains

The organization of the document flows from the general categories that comprise the central domains of the curriculum, to the specific behaviors that reflect the foundational abilities expected of students at the course level. The domains should be viewed as themes or broad categories of professional focus that transcend numerous courses and learning activities. The concept of domains is intended to encourage threads of consistency, emphasis and focus that develop and advance throughout the curriculum. In this document, domains are labeled

- I. Professionalism and Ethics
- II. Dental Hygiene Process of Care
- III. Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- IV. Community Involvement

Competencies:

The Competencies in this document serve as the foundation for the selection of course content, sequencing of courses, intra and extra mural learning activities, faculty communication and decision-making, and outcomes assessment. As such, the Competencies serve as a framework for curriculum development, implementation and evaluation. The document is viewed as a method of communicating and demonstrating the standards that the faculty and society have deemed important for an entry-level dental hygienist.

Competencies for entry into the Profession of Dental Hygiene

Domains: Professionalism, Patient Care, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, and Community Involvement

1. Professionalism: The dental Hygienist must be able to discern and manage ethical issues and problems in dental practice, exercise critical thinking and sound clinical judgment and communicate with other professionals. This competency includes the ability to:
 - 1.1 Apply a professional code of ethics in all endeavors.
 - 1.2 Adhere to state and federal laws, recommendations and regulations in the provision of dental hygiene care.
 - 1.3 Provide dental hygiene care to promote patient/client health and wellness using critical thinking and problem solving in the provision of evidenced-based practice.
 - 1.4 Assume responsibility for dental hygiene actions and care based on accepted scientific theories and research as well as the accepted standard of care.
 - 1.5 Continuously perform self-assessment for life-long learning and professional growth.
 - 1.6 Advance the profession through service activities and affiliations with professional organizations.
 - 1.7 Provide quality assurance mechanisms for health services.

- 1.8 Communicate effectively with individuals and groups from diverse populations both in writing and verbally.
 - 1.9 Provide accurate, consistent and complete documentation for assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation and evaluation of dental hygiene services.
 - 1.10 Provide care to all clients using an individualized approach that is humane, empathetic, and caring.
 - 1.11 Pursue continuing education courses and/or higher education that demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning.
2. Patient Care: The dental hygienist must possess a thorough foundation in the biomedical, clinical, and behavioral sciences and be able to apply those principles in assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation and evaluation of treatment.
- 2.1 Assessment: The dental hygienist will be able to perform an examination that collects biological, psychological, and social information needed to evaluate the medical and oral conditions for patients of all ages. This includes the ability to recognize and manage behavioral factors which affect oral health and to use that information to implement strategies that facilitate the provision of oral health care. This competency includes the ability to:
 - a. Perform a comprehensive examination using clinical, radiographic, periodontal, dental charting, and other data collection procedures to assess the patient's needs.
 - b. Recognize predisposing and etiologic risk factors that require intervention to prevent disease.
 - c. Obtain, review and update a complete medical and dental history.
 - d. Recognize health conditions and medications that impact overall patient care.
 - e. Identify patients at risk for a medical emergency and manage the patient in a manner that prevents an emergency.
 - 2.2 Diagnosis: The dental hygienist will be able to analyze and interpret data to formulate a dental hygiene diagnosis related to and congruent with the diagnosis of the dentist and other health professionals. This competency includes the ability to:
 - a. Use assessment findings, etiologic factors and clinical data in determining a dental hygiene diagnosis.
 - b. Identify patient needs and significant findings that impact the delivery of dental hygiene services.
 - c. Obtain the proper consultations as indicated.
 - 2.3 Planning: The dental hygienist will be able to collaborate with the patient or other health professionals, to formulate a comprehensive dental hygiene care plan that is patient centered and based on current scientific evidence. This competency includes the ability to:
 - a. Establish a planned sequence of care (educational, clinical and evaluation) based on the dental hygiene diagnosis; identified oral conditions; potential problems; etiologic and risk factors; and available treatment modalities.
 - b. Prioritize the care plan based on the health status and actual and potential problems of the individual to facilitate optimal health.
 - c. Establish a collaborative relationship with the patient in the planned care to include the etiology, prognosis, and treatment alternatives.

- d. Make referrals to other health care professionals.
 - e. Obtain the patient's informed consent.
- 2.4 Implementation: The dental Hygienist will be able to provide specialized treatment that includes preventive and therapeutic services designed to achieve and maintain oral health. This competency includes the ability to:
- a. Utilize accepted infection control procedures.
 - b. Obtain diagnostic quality radiographs.
 - c. Apply basic and advanced techniques of dental hygiene instrumentation to remove deposits without trauma to hard and soft tissues.
 - d. Select and administer appropriate chemotherapeutic agents and provide pre- and post-treatment instructions.
 - e. Provide adjunct dental hygiene services that are legally permitted.
 - f. Provide oral health education to assist patients in assuming responsibility for their own oral health.
- 2.5 Evaluation: The dental hygienist will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the employed clinical and educational services and modify as considered necessary. This competency includes the ability to:
- a. Evaluate the effectiveness of the patient's self-care and the dental hygiene treatment in attaining or maintaining oral health.
 - b. Determine the clinical outcomes of dental hygiene interventions.
 - c. Develop a maintenance program that meets the patient's needs.
 - d. Provide referrals for subsequent treatment based on the evaluation findings.
3. Health Promotion and Disease Prevention: The dental hygienist must be competent in the performance and delivery of oral health promotion and disease prevention services in public health, private practice and alternative settings. This competency includes the ability to:
- 3.1 Evaluate and utilize methods to ensure the health and safety of the patient and the dental hygienist in the delivery of dental hygiene.
 - 3.2 Evaluate factors that can be used to promote patient adherence to disease prevention and/or health maintenance strategies.
 - 3.3 Provide educational methods using appropriate communication skills and educational strategies to promote optimal health.
 - 3.4 Promote preventive health behaviors by personally striving to maintain oral and general health.
 - 3.5 Identify individual and population risk factors and develop strategies that promote health related quality of life.
4. Community Involvement: Dental hygienists must appreciate their role as health professionals at the local, state, and national levels. The dental hygienist must assess, plan, and implement programs and activities to benefit the general population. The dental hygienist must also be prepared to influence others to facilitate access to care and services. This competency includes the ability to:

- 4.1 Provide community oral health services in a variety of settings.
- 4.2 Provide screening, referral and education services that facilitate public access to the health care system.
- 4.3 Respond to patient or community requests for information about contemporary dental problems.
- 4.4 Promote the dental hygiene profession by actively participating in the membership, leadership and/or service in professional organizations.
- 4.5 Assess and evaluate community based oral disease prevention strategies that aim to improve the oral health of the public.