

Quick Tips for the Dental Office



Dental Hygienist Supervision & Scope of Practice

Supervision in Private Dental Facilities

Dentists should adhere to the ASA Classifications (see State Board of Dentistry regulations) used to determine a patient's health and treatment plan, as well as the level of supervision needed. There have been changes to how the classifications apply to supervision of dental hygienists.

Most notably, the definition of **general supervision** was changed so that hygienists may provide hygiene services to patients within one year of a dentist having examined a patient, rendered a diagnosis and treatment plan, and authorized the hygiene services. Previously, hygienists had to provide these services within 90 days of the dentist's examination.

Direct supervision is still defined as the dentist having examined the patient, authorized the procedure to be performed, is physically present in the dental facility and available when the procedure occurs and takes full professional responsibility for the completed procedure.

Following are the supervision requirements applying to these hygiene services:

- Placement of sub gingival agents: Hygienists may provide this service under direct supervision, but general supervision would apply if the dentist has review the patient's records and medical history and has written a prescription or given an order for the placement of sub gingival agents.
- Periodontal probing, scaling, root planning, polishing or another procedure required to remove calculus deposits, accretions, excess or flash restorative materials and stains from the exposed surfaces of the teeth and beneath the gingival:



Hygienists may provide these services under **direct supervision** when the patient is suffering from systemic disease which is severe, incapacitating or life threatening.

General supervision would apply if the patient is free of systemic disease or suffers from mild systemic disease (as determined by the dentist, with input from the hygienist).

Supervision requirements cont'd.

Hygienists may provide these services under general supervision:

1. Evaluation of that patient to collect data to identify dental hygiene care needs.
2. Application of fluorides and other recognized topical agents for the prevention of oral diseases.
3. Conditioning of teeth for and application of sealants.
4. Taking impressions of teeth for athletic appliances.
5. Taking radiographs.

Hygienists may provide this service only under direct supervision:

Administration of local anesthesia (special permit needed)

Local Anesthesia Permits

Hygienists may apply for a permit to administer local anesthesia under dentists' direct supervision. Local anesthesia is defined to include local infiltration anesthesia and intraoral nerve block anesthesia limited to the 2nd (maxillary) and 3rd (mandibular) divisions of the trigeminal nerve.

Please note that dentists are ultimately responsible for making the decision whether their hygienists administer local anesthesia, even if they have the permit to do so.

In order to obtain this permit, a hygienist must:

- Have a current license in good standing.
- Hold current certification in Basic Life Support (BLS).
- Have graduated from a CODA-approved hygiene program that included a course in local anesthesia, within five years of applying for the permit **OR**
- Have taken a course from a CODA-approved program that consists of at least 30 hours of didactic and clinical instruction in local anesthesia **OR**
- Have a current license or permit from another state to administer local anesthesia (see regulations for more information).

Hygienists who wish to maintain a permit to administer local anesthesia must complete three hours of the required 20 hours of continuing education in courses related to local anesthesia, including pharmacology or other related courses.

Public Health Dental Hygiene Practitioners

Hygienists may apply for a permit to practice as public health dental hygienists (PHDHP), after meeting the following conditions:

- Have a license in good standing
- Have a statement from a licensed dentist(s) that he/she has at least 3,600 hours of clinical practice
- Purchase malpractice insurance

Public settings is defined as “public and private educational institutions providing elementary and secondary instruction, correctional facilities, health care facilities, domiciliary care facilities, older adult daily living centers, continuing-care provider facilities, federally qualified health centers, free and reduced-fee nonprofit health clinics, and any public or private institution under the jurisdiction of a federal, state or local agency.”

PHDHPs are required to refer patients seen in public settings to a dentist on an annual basis, though the patient's failure to comply with the referral does not preclude the PHDHP from providing hygiene services the following year.

PHDHPs are allowed to take radiographs without any supervision from a dentist, and must provide the patient with a copy of the radiograph, along with a referral to a dentist, within one month of having taken the radiograph. Dentists reviewing these radiographs should report any diagnosis to the patient and the PHDHP.

In order to maintain this permit, PHDHPs must complete five hours of the required 20 hours of continuing education in public health-related courses. Those school hygienists who also have permits to practice as PHDHPs may complete education courses approved for certification by the school district to meet the State Board of Dentistry's 20-hour continuing education requirement.