

Dental Assistant

Role Expectations

POSITION OVERVIEW

The Dental Assistant supports the clinical team by preparing patients for treatment, assisting the doctor chairside, maintaining operatory readiness, and ensuring a smooth patient experience from seating to dismissal. The Dental Assistant reports to the Office Manager for administrative matters and takes clinical direction from the treating doctor. This role requires a calm, organized, and attentive professional who can work efficiently in a clinical environment, anticipate the doctor's needs, and maintain the highest standards of patient care, infection control, and legal compliance at all times.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Develop a thorough understanding of the practice, the doctor's clinical preferences, the procedures performed, and the standards expected of every team member.
- Review the day's schedule before patients arrive. Know what procedures are planned and prepare all necessary instruments, trays, materials, and equipment in advance.
- Set up each operatory fully before the patient is seated. Ensure everything the doctor needs is in place before the appointment begins.
- Greet and seat the patient in a welcoming and professional manner. Confirm the patient's medical history and reason for visit.
- Take and record vital signs including blood pressure as directed by the doctor and practice protocol.
- Ensure the treatment plan has been reviewed with the patient and that all required consent forms are signed before any procedure begins. No treatment may proceed without proper patient consent on file.
- Take necessary clinical records as directed by the doctor, including intraoral photographs, digital scans, dental radiographs and CBCT imaging, within the scope of the assistant's certifications and state law.
- Assist the doctor chairside during all clinical procedures. Anticipate the doctor's needs, pass instruments efficiently, maintain a clear operating field, and support the smooth progress of each procedure.
- Monitor patient comfort throughout every procedure. Ensure the patient feels comfortable and relaxed, and communicate any concerns or changes in the patient's condition to the doctor immediately.
- Address patient questions and within the assistant's capacity. Do not make clinical diagnoses or treatment recommendations. Refer all clinical decisions and questions beyond the assistant's scope to the treating doctor.

- Encourage the patient to follow through with the recommended treatment plan in a supportive and non-pressured manner.
- Document clinical notes in the practice management system accurately, completely, and promptly as directed by the treating doctor. Clinical documentation must reflect only what was performed and directed by the licensed provider.
- Report any adverse reaction or patient complaint to the treating doctor or Office Manager immediately.
- Provide post-operative care instructions to the patient clearly and as directed by the doctor. Ensure the patient understands what to expect and who to contact if concerns arise.
- Provide oral hygiene instructions to patients as directed by the doctor or hygienist, using appropriate educational materials and clear, simple language.
- Dismiss the patient professionally. Confirm they have all necessary instructions, prescriptions, and follow-up appointments before they leave.
- Break down and disinfect the operatory after each patient in full compliance with infection control protocols and OSHA standards. Do not seat the next patient until the operatory has been properly turned over.
- Sterilize all instruments using approved sterilization methods and document all sterilization cycles as required by practice protocol and applicable regulations.
- Handle all medical waste and sharps disposal in strict accordance with OSHA regulations and practice protocol. Improper disposal of medical waste or sharps is not acceptable under any circumstance.
- Prepare trays and materials for the next scheduled procedure as soon as the operatory is cleared.
- Coordinate lab cases, maintain clear communication with dental laboratories regarding case status and timelines, and ensure all cases are returned to the office prior to the patient's scheduled appointment.
- Monitor clinical supply inventory on an ongoing basis. Maintain accurate inventory records and prepare a re-order list for the Office Manager when supplies need to be replenished.
- Perform required maintenance and cleaning procedures for dental units and equipment according to manufacturer guidelines and practice protocol. Document all maintenance activities as required.
- Conduct weekly autoclave spore tests as required by state regulations and practice protocol. Document all test results and report any failures to the Office Manager immediately.
- At the end of each day, ensure all clinical equipment is properly shut down and turned off in accordance with office policy before leaving the premises.
- Support front desk operations during high-volume periods as needed and within the scope of this role.
- Maintain all required certifications in current and valid status at all times, including CPR/BLS, radiation safety certification, and any additional state-specific requirements applicable to this role.
- Be prepared to activate the practice's emergency protocol at any time. Maintain current CPR/BLS certification and be ready to perform CPR and basic life support in the event of a medical emergency.

PROFESSIONALISM STANDARDS

- Arrive on time and prepared for all scheduled shifts. Operatory setup should begin before the first patient arrives.
- Maintain professional appearance and adhere to the practice dress code and infection control attire requirements at all times.
- Communicate with patients in a calm, clear, and caring manner. The Dental Assistant often spends more time with the patient than any other team member and directly shapes the patient's experience.
- Communicate with the doctor, Office Manager, and fellow team members in a respectful and professional manner.
- Handle all patient information with strict confidentiality in accordance with HIPAA regulations and practice privacy policies.
- Represent the practice's values and standards in every patient interaction and in all conduct within the practice.

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

The Dental Assistant must perform all duties strictly within the legal scope of practice defined by the applicable state dental practice act. No procedure may be performed that requires a dental license or exceeds the assistant's authorized functions under state law. Expanded functions, if performed, must be covered by the appropriate state-issued certification or designation. When in doubt about whether a task is within scope, the assistant must consult the treating doctor before proceeding. Performing functions outside the legal scope of practice is grounds for immediate termination and may result in legal liability for both the individual and the practice.