

DENTAL HYGIENIST I

This is technical dental work in examining, cleaning, and instructing on the general care of the teeth. This work has been identified in the Department of Correction, the Department of Human Resources, North Carolina Memorial Hospital, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In these environments, the dental hygienist may perform the following duties under the general supervision of a licensed dentist: examines teeth of patients and makes referrals to dentist if special professional care is indicated, applies topical fluorides and performs dental prophylaxis in the prevention of dental disease, records findings and maintains records on dental status and services rendered to patients, instructs patients on the proper care of teeth and recommends measures for the prevention of dental disease, and assists the dentist in planning and carrying out dental health programs.

I. DIFFICULTY OF WORK:

Complexity - Work assignments are recurring and typically repetitive in nature with some variety and intricacy, since work is primarily chairside. Assignments are performed independently and require considerable knowledge of and skill in the application of the techniques and practices of dental hygiene. Some special knowledges and skills may be required if in a specialized area.

Guidelines - These include established technical procedures, office protocols, and available journals and textbooks. Guidelines apply to most work situations.

II. RESPONSIBILITY:

Accountability - Employees have some opportunity for taking actions which represent or reflect upon the agency due to contacts with the patient population in examination, treatment, and teaching.

Consequence of Action - The employees' actions, i.e., treatments, could result in minor discomfort to the patient population served.

Review - Work is reviewed periodically by the dentist while in progress and always upon completion through observation, records, and reports. Legally, the dentist must review the chairside work of the hygienist upon completion.

III. INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS:

Subject Matter - The information given by the hygienist to the patient may not be accepted or understood because the patient may be a child, mentally retarded or ill, unpredictable, or refusing treatment.

Purpose - Instructions are provided to motivate patients to practice good dental care, to explain procedures being performed, and to persuade cooperation.

IV. WORK ENVIRONMENT:

Nature of Working Conditions - Work with the mentally ill, mentally retarded, incarcerated, or uncooperative patient can be considerably disagreeable and stressful. Most work units are agreeable, with a few stressful or inconvenient aspects if the facilities are not up to date.

Nature and Potential of Personal Hazards - Patients may be verbally abusive, difficult to restrain and may attempt physical harm. Hazards include routine exposure to sharp instruments, x-ray, chemicals, mercury vapor, and needles.

V. JOB REQUIREMENTS:

Knowledges, Skills, and Abilities - Considerable knowledge of and skill in the application of the techniques and practices of dental hygiene. Ability to secure the cooperation of the patient and to elicit required information; ability to understand and follow oral and written instructions, and to interpret and maintain records and reports; ability to deal tactfully with the public and to exercise good judgment in appraising situations and making decisions; ability to work with other professional and support personnel in the performance of duties typical of the dental hygienist and assisting with other duties which may be of a lesser complexity.

Minimum Education and Experience - Graduation from an approved two-year program of dental hygiene.

Necessary Special Qualification - Licensed to practice as a dental hygienist in North Carolina.