

## Dental Assistant Education and Training Requirements

### Education/Training Requirements

It takes a relatively short period of time to become a dental assistant. Dental assistants receive their formal education through academic programs at community colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes, universities or dental schools. Graduates of these programs usually receive certificates. Although the majority of academic dental assisting programs take nine to eleven months to complete, some schools offer accelerated training, part-time education programs or training via distance education.

### Accreditation

The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) of the American Dental Association is responsible for accrediting dental assisting programs. There are approximately 270 CODA-accredited dental assisting programs in the United States.

### Certification

Dental assistants can become certified by passing an examination that evaluates their knowledge. Most dental assistants who choose to become nationally certified take the Dental Assisting National Board's (DANB) Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) examination. Becoming a Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) assures the public that the dental assistant is prepared to assist competently in the provision of dental care.

Dental assistants are eligible to take the CDA examination if they have completed a dental assisting program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation. Individuals who have been trained on the job or have graduated from non-accredited programs are eligible to take the national certification examination after they have completed two years of full-time work experience as dental assistants. Some states also recognize passage of components of the CDA examination, such as the Radiation Health and Safety examination, or the Infection Control examination, for licensing and regulatory purposes.

State regulations vary, and some states offer registration or licensure in addition to this national certification program.