

California Break Compliance Guide

for Dental Practices



A Practical Guide to Help Dental Practices Understand California Meal and Rest Break Compliance

A-Team Dental Staffing

Strong Teams. Better Care.

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Helping dental practices build strong teams and compliant workplace systems.

California Break Law Overview

Dental offices often operate on tight schedules with back-to-back patients, which can make employee breaks difficult to manage. However, California labor law requires employers to provide compliant meal and rest breaks for non-exempt employees.

Failure to properly provide these breaks can expose a practice to labor claims, even if employees never raised concerns during employment. This guide provides a simple overview to help dental practices understand break requirements.

Rest Break Requirements

Employees are entitled to a paid 10-minute rest break for every four hours worked or major fraction thereof.

Typical 8-hour shift example:

- Morning 10-minute break
- 30-minute meal break
- Afternoon 10-minute break

Meal Break Requirements

Employees who work more than five hours must receive a 30-minute uninterrupted meal break. The meal break must begin before the end of the employee's fifth hour of work.

Example:

Start time: 8:00 AM

Meal break must begin before 12:59 PM.

Dental Practice Tip:

Because dental schedules often run back-to-back with patients, many practices build small buffer blocks into the schedule to help ensure team members can take required rest breaks.

Employee Break Acknowledgement Form

Dental practices may choose to have employees sign an acknowledgment confirming they understand their meal and rest break rights.. You may create a document that has the follow format like the example provided below:

Employee Break Acknowledgement Form

Employee Name: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

I acknowledge that I have been informed of my right to take all legally required meal and rest breaks under California labor law.

I understand that:

1. I am entitled to a paid 10-minute rest break for every four hours worked or major fraction thereof.
2. I am entitled to an uninterrupted 30-minute meal break if I work more than five hours in a day.
3. These breaks are intended to be duty-free.
4. If I am unable to take a required meal or rest break, I understand that I must notify management so the situation can be documented and addressed appropriately.

I understand that it is my responsibility to notify management if I am unable to take a required break so that the situation can be addressed.

Employee Signature: _____

Manager Signature: _____

Dental Practice Tip:

Most payroll timesheet softwares already have a built in system where the employee may clock in and out for their required 10 minute breaks. As an admin of the software you may be able to write a note in the clock-in or clock-out time stamp. We strongly suggest using this as some employees may take advantage and add a few extra minutes to their paid breaks.

Important Compliance Note: Meal Break Premium Pay

Under California labor law, if an employee is not provided a compliant meal break, the employer must provide one additional hour of pay at the employee's regular rate.

This is commonly referred to as a meal break premium.

Example:

The employee works 8 hours but does not receive a compliant meal break.

Employer must pay:

8 hours worked

+ 1 hour meal break premium

Total paid hours = 9 hours

If your timekeeping software does not track meal breaks automatically, practices may consider implementing manual documentation methods such as daily or weekly break logs.

Disclaimer: This resource is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Dental practices should consult with an employment attorney or HR professional regarding compliance with applicable labor laws.

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