



The Dental Assisting Program

The dental assisting program at Doña Ana Community College offers a certificate of completion in dental assisting. The dental assisting profession is both challenging and rewarding. Dental Assistants are professionals who enjoy helping others, work closely with patients and work collaboratively with other members of the dental team. Dental assistants are often referred to as the dentists' "other set of hands".

There is no lack of variety in the types of tasks that dental assistants perform. They prepare equipment, materials, and instruments for patient care; perform sterilization and disinfection procedures; provide patients with instructions for dental procedures; create temporary crowns; provide coronal polishing and placement of sealants; take impressions of teeth; create study casts (molds); take and review patient medical histories; expose and develop radiographs; and perform a variety of other duties. They may also be responsible for administrative tasks, such as billing, patient verification, scheduling of various types of treatment appointments, and material inventory.

Assistants may work in a general-practice office where a dentist provides multiple types of treatment, including restorative/operative work (fillings), prosthetics (crowns, bridges, and dentures), and perhaps some surgery. They may want to specialize for work in periodontics, oral and maxillofacial surgery, pedodontics, or orthodontics.

In the state of New Mexico, dental assistants can become certified to perform the following expanded duties: radiology (taking x-rays), coronal polishing (polishing of teeth and removal of stains), fluoride treatments (the act of placing fluoride on a patient's teeth), and sealant placement (used to prevent decay). These certifications are obtained through the State Dental Board and are a portion of the Dental Assisting National Board Certification Exam.

PROGRAM ADMISSION SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

This is a limited entry program. Successful candidates generally have a GPA of 2.8 or higher. Faculty to student ratio in the clinical setting is 1:5, thus, allowing for individualized instruction.



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