

CAREER LADDERS

DENTAL ASSISTANT

Dental assistants are the employees primarily responsible for arranging dental instruments, materials, and medication to hand them to the dentist when needed.

Employment opportunities in the health care field are currently at an exceptionally high level. No matter what the state of the economy, the demand for health care professionals will continue to grow. Individuals can start in entry-level occupations and advance their careers while enjoying the stability of employment. Also, individuals can start at the mid or advanced levels, depending on their education, training, and career goals. At each of the levels, there are many opportunities for more challenging and higher paying positions.

SAGINAW VALLEY

Each ladder depicts a series of work experiences that leads to more challenging and higher paying opportunities. While every level of the ladder can provide a satisfying job, some employees will choose to gain even more skills and responsibilities that will advance them in their careers. To do so, they will need more education, training, and work experiences. Some jobs will require a certificate, a license, or an advanced degree.

CLIMBING THE CAREER LADDER

ADVANCED LEVEL

Associate's, bachelor's, master's or doctorate degree required; must graduate from an accredited program; must obtain license or certification

Physical Therapist
\$23.31-\$33.68/hour

Dental Hygienist
\$21.96-\$32.48/hour

MID LEVEL

Associate's degree or graduation from an accredited program required; must obtain a license or certification

Physical Therapist Assistant
\$14.55-\$20.57/hour

Medical Records Technician
\$9.40-\$14.71/hour

Respiratory Therapist
\$16.55-\$22.18/hour

ENTRY LEVEL

Most occupations require a high school diploma or a graduate equivalency diploma (GED), three to six months training, and knowledge of medical terminology; certification is required in some of the occupations

Home Health Aide
\$6.65-\$9.06/hour

Medical Billers and Coders
\$7.65-\$24.46/hour

Dental Assistant
\$8.35-\$16.20/hour

Wages will vary within this occupation based on the employee's education, training, and years of experience.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Each occupation is described in terms of specific tasks and typical job duties.

A DENTAL ASSISTANT MUST BE ABLE TO:

- Help patients feel comfortable before, during, and after treatment
- Take and develop dental x-rays
- Take medical histories for patients
- Sterilize and prepare dental instruments
- Teach appropriate oral hygiene strategies to maintain oral health
- Provide patients with instructions for oral care following surgery or other dental treatment procedures.

WAGES

Wage information was obtained from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth and from local employers to give a general idea of the wages and salaries for this occupation.

WAGE RANGE

\$8.35-\$16.20/hour

WORKING CONDITIONS

Dental assistants work in well-lighted and clean environments. Their work area is usually near the dental chair so that they can arrange instruments, materials, and medication, and also hand them to the dentist when needed. Because dental assistants may be exposed to infectious diseases from their patients, they must wear protective gloves, masks, and eyewear.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Courses, programs, and certificates that are needed for employment are offered by local education and training providers.



HIGH SCHOOL

- Completion of high school's Health Sciences Career Pathway requirements and/or appropriate career and technical education classes
- Algebra
- Chemistry
- Biology
- Health
- Office practices
- Career studies, such as the medical career program at the Saginaw Career Complex or the dental occupations program at the Bay-Arenac ISD Career Center

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

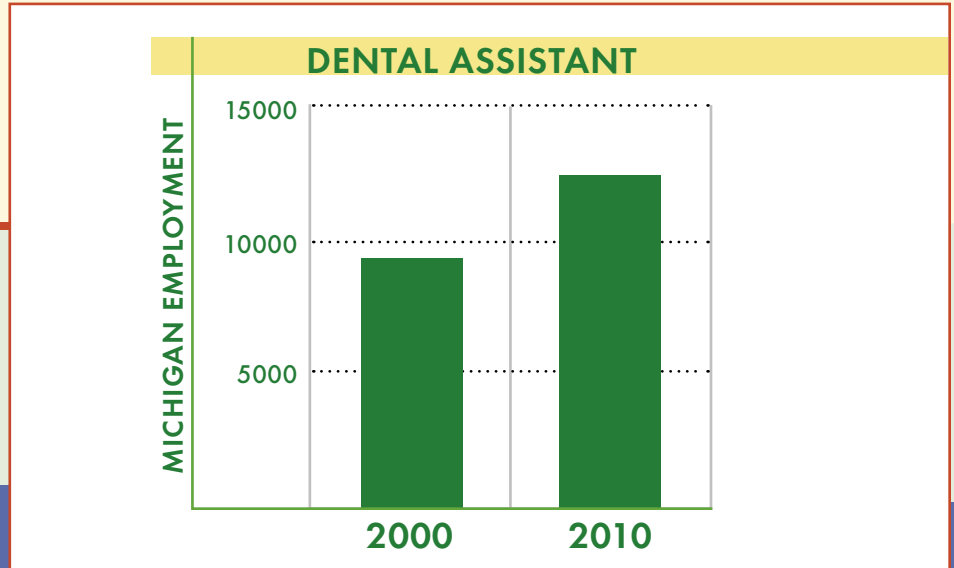
- Delta College: certificate in dental assisting and certificate in dental assisting CDA/RDA transition track; associate's degree in applied science – dental assisting

LOCAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

- Local school districts
- Bay-Arenac ISD Career Center
- Saginaw Career Complex
- Delta College

JOB OUTLOOK

The rate of growth within this occupation is projected by data from local employers and the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.



ADVANCEMENT

Without further education, advancement opportunities for dental assistants are limited. Some dental assistants become office managers, dental-assisting instructors, or dental product sales representatives. Others go back to school to become dental hygienists. For many, this entry-level occupation serves as a stepping stone to more highly skilled and higher paying jobs.

WHAT THE EMPLOYER SAID



WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A POTENTIAL EMPLOYEE FOR THIS POSITION?

"I look for someone who enjoys working with people and has a caring way with adults and children. I also look for someone who enjoys very specific work, follows directions and has emotional maturity. This person must enjoy growing intellectually and be able to take positive correction. In our office, the dental team gives the highest quality service we can give and treats the patients well, so that they want to come back and will tell their family and friends about what a good place this is. I prefer to hire someone who has participated in a dental-assisting training program so that they have been taught the correct way to do their job."

Dr. Robert Dennison, D.M.D., dentist
Wadsworth Dental Center

STAR PROFILE

This interview is intended to show you what is needed to be a star employee.



EMPLOYEE:
VINA WILLIAMSON

OCCUPATION:
DENTAL ASSISTANT

COMPANY:
**WADSWORTH
DENTAL CLINIC**

TELL US HOW YOU ATTAINED YOUR CURRENT POSITION.

I had taken dental assistant classes when I lived in Dallas, Texas. After I moved to Michigan, I applied for a position at the Wadsworth Dental Clinic. I was fortunate to be selected for the position. I have worked here for about four years.

DESCRIBE YOUR TYPICAL DAY.

When I arrive at work, I receive my schedule of appointments for the day. After I review the patients' charts, I prepare the instruments, materials and medication needed. I greet the patients and make them feel comfortable before, during, and after their dental treatment. I also sterilize and disinfect the instruments and equipment and do lab work.

WHAT QUALITIES MAKE SOMEONE A "STAR" IN THIS OCCUPATION?

A star is someone who loves what they do.

WHAT TRAINING AND EDUCATION DID YOU NEED TO ENTER THIS POSITION?

I have a two-year associate's degree and earned my certification. Many assistants learn their skills on the job, but more and more, dental assistants are being trained in dental-assisting programs offered by community and junior colleges.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST/LEAST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

One of the best parts of my job is that I help people smile. I love working one-on-one with the patients. I like being able to help calm their fears. The thing I like least about my job is the lab work.

WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU GIVE SOMEONE SEEKING A JOB IN YOUR FIELD?

My advice is to stay focused. The more education and training that you get will help you do your job better. Dental assistant classes will help you know what and why you do the procedures you do as an assistant.

ARE THERE ANY LICENSES OR CERTIFICATIONS NEEDED FOR YOUR POSITION?

Some dental offices hire individuals and train them on-the-job. Many now prefer that the assistants have earned their Certified Dental Assistant certification. It is required in 30 states.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Career Ladders project began as a Saginaw County Vision 2020 initiative. To date, more than 300 individuals have been involved in the project. It is impossible to list them all, but the Comprehensive Education and Workforce Development Committee appreciates each one and the incredible participation by our major employers and educational institutions, as well as the support from the Arnold and Gertrude Boutell Memorial Fund, The Dow Chemical Company, The Dow Corning Foundation, the Fordney Club, the Hospital Council of East Central Michigan, the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, the National Tooling and Machining Association – Saginaw Valley Chapter, the Saginaw Community Foundation, the Saginaw County Business and Education Partnership, the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Saginaw County's local school districts, Saginaw County's Promise, the Saginaw County Vision 2020, the Saginaw Future Inc., the Saginaw/Midland/Bay Michigan Works!, the Saginaw Township Business Association, the Saginaw Valley Manufacturers' Association, and the Saginaw Valley Tech Prep Partnership. We also want to thank NOVA for their guidance.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER/PROGRAM. AUXILIARY AIDS AND SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.