

**DIVISION OF DENTAL HYGIENE
COMPETENCY DOCUMENT
APPROVED 2.19.15**

I. Professionalism and Ethics

The contemporary dental hygienist interacts with the health care team, the community and patients using evidenced-based knowledge, professional judgment and skills. The dental hygienist is a licensed professional who must be capable of discerning and effectively managing ethical issues and problems in the workplace. The dental hygienist increases the knowledge base of the profession and therefore must be able to understand and apply rapidly changing, evidence-based information to a variety of roles in the health care environment. Therefore, critical thinking and problem-solving skills are critical to possess.

Professional behavior encompasses components including a team approach, interpersonal skills, attention to feedback, protocol adherence, thorough and complete documentation, and adherence to ethical principles. Knowledge of the scientific method ensures that actions taken by the dental hygienist are based on scientific evidence, and not merely tradition, intuition or personal preference. It is the professional responsibility of the dental hygienist to acquire, synthesize, use and evaluate information in a critical and scientific manner in order to promote the values of oral health related to overall health and wellness.

Competencies:

Specifically the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

- 1.1 Assume responsibility for dental hygiene actions and care based on accepted scientific theories and research as well as accepted standards of care.
- 1.2 Provide accurate, consistent and complete documentation for assessment, dental hygiene diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation of dental hygiene care.
- 1.3 Adhere to the Minnesota Dental Hygiene Practice Act as well as other state and federal laws governing the practice of dental hygiene.
- 1.4 Continually perform self-assessment for professional growth through lifelong learning.
- 1.5 Advance dental hygiene and the dental profession through service activities and affiliations with professional organizations.
- 1.6 Communicate professional knowledge orally and in writing (using principles of scientific writing) with health care professionals and lay persons.
- 1.7 Critically analyze published reports of oral health research, oral health products and treatments and apply this information to the practice of dental hygiene.
- 1.8 Serve all patients without discrimination, appreciating cultural diversity.

II. Dental Hygiene Process of Care

The dental hygienist is a licensed preventive oral health professional who provides educational, preventive, and therapeutic services in the support of optimal oral health. The dental hygiene process of care requires assessment, dental hygiene diagnosis, treatment planning, implementation and evaluation in the promotion of oral and systemic health using evidence-based principles.

Specifically, the dental hygiene graduate must be able to:

- 2.1. Systematically collect, analyze and record data on the general, oral and psychosocial health status of the patient using methods consistent with medico-legal principles.
- 2.2. Identify the oral health needs of patients to promote healthy lifestyles appropriate health management and preventive strategies.
- 2.3. Demonstrate critical decision-making using all patient assessment data to determine oral health needs.
- 2.4. Collaborate with the patient and or other health professionals to formulate a comprehensive dental hygiene care plan that is patient-centered and based on current scientific evidence.
- 2.5. Provide specialized treatment that includes preventive and therapeutic services designed to achieve and maintain oral health.
- 2.6. Evaluate the outcomes of the implemented clinical, preventive, and educational services and modify as needed.

III. Health Promotion

The dental hygienist promotes the value of optimal oral health as related to general health and wellness of all patients. The dental hygienist is an integral provider within the health care system to assess, plan, implement, and evaluate oral health care programs to ensure population health.

The Individual

- 3.1 Provide educational services using appropriate communication skills and educational strategies.
- 3.2 Identify risk factors and develop strategies to promote health related quality of life.
- 3.3 Use behavior change models to meet patient's preferences and priorities for health management.

The Community

- 3.4 Identify population risk factors and identify interventions that promote oral health while preventing disease.

- 3.5 Provide screening, referral and education services that facilitate public access to the health care system.
- 3.6 Assess, plan, implement and evaluate community based oral health programs.
- 3.7 Develop a perspective of the relationship between the dental hygiene profession and the U.S. health care system.
- 3.8 Recognize the importance of public policy processes to move community groups, businesses and government agencies to support legislation enacting health care policy.

IV. Professional Commitment and Advancement

Complex issues of health policy, politics and professionalization require the dental hygienist to be critical thinkers in preparation for roles as leaders, organizers, and advocates in a changing health care environment. The dental hygienist must make a commitment to professional development and lifelong learning. Understanding leadership principles allows the dental hygienist to advance the goals of the profession both as an individual and via groups.

Specifically, the dental hygienist must be able to:

- 4.1 Examine and understand professional issues that influence the practice of dental hygiene such as workforce needs, delivery models, professional regulation and the legislative process in order to advance the profession of dental hygiene.
- 4.2 Value the dental hygiene profession through career growth and development and commitment to lifelong learning.
- 4.3 Apply business and management skills in the practice environment and within health care organizations.
- 4.4 Assume leadership roles within intra- and interprofessional teams.
- 4.5 Support research initiatives to advance the profession of dental hygiene.

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