

The Dental Team

In Relation to the OPA Pilot

This is a basic hierarchal flow of dental team members in Missouri, including the Oral Preventive Assistant — a new type of Expanded Function Dental Assistant — whose creation is being proposed through a workforce pilot study. Below is more specific information about the dental team roles.



DENTIST

EDUCATION — Graduate of an accredited dental school; dental specialty degrees require additional education. Licensed to practice by the Missouri Dental Board.

ROLE — Provides diagnosis and treatment plan for a patient. A dentist can then delegate this treatment to other members of the team, depending on the type of treatment and supervision required. Delegation of treatment also depends on a team members' license or permit that specifies scope of practice (what they are allowed to do).

SUPERVISION — A dentist is not supervised but provides various types of supervision to others on the dental team.

CAREER — A dentist may have been a dental assistant and/or dental hygienist before receiving their dental degree.

DENTAL HYGIENIST

EDUCATION — Graduate of an accredited dental hygiene program. Licensed to practice by the Missouri Dental Board.

ROLE — Assists dentist to carry out treatment plan for patient, especially periodontal care.

SUPERVISION — May work under direct, indirect or general supervision of the dentist, depending on the treatment being delegated.

CAREER — Dental Hygienists sometimes become dentists. Dental Hygienists also can obtain one or more Expanded Functions permits to provide that specific type of care, in addition to their typical role in periodontal care.

EFDA (EXPANDED FUNCTIONS ASST)

EDUCATION — Pass an EFDA course for specific type of care and have Missouri Dental Board permit, plus dentist delegation to provide expanded functions. To attend any EFDA course, assistant must have passed a prerequisite exam.

ROLE — Assists dentist to carry out treatment plan for patient. An EFDA may have one or more permits for five types of care: Restorative I (basic fillings), Restorative II (advanced fillings), Removable Prosthetics (dentures), Fixed Prosthetics (crowns and bridges) and Orthodontics (braces).

SUPERVISION — May work only under the direct supervision of the dentist.

CAREER — EFDAs may become dental hygienists or dentists. Typically, an EFDA has one or more permits they use in a general dental practice, or they may use a specific permit in a specific practice type, such as those limited to Orthodontic or Prosthodontic specialties.

OPA (ORAL PREVENTIVE ASST)

EDUCATION — Because an OPA is a type of EFDA, completion of an Expanded Function course for this type of care. An OPA may or may not already hold other EFDA permits.

ROLE — Assists dentist AND hygienist to carry out treatment plan for patient, especially periodontal care.

SUPERVISION — May work under the direct supervision of the dentist OR hygienist.

CAREER — The OPA is a new type of EFDA who will focus on periodontal care. The OPA concept and pilot study is unique because it is suggested an OPA be able to work under the direct supervision of the dentist OR hygienist after a dentist has provided a treatment plan. Different from a hygienist who can care for patients with varying degrees of periodontal health, an OPA would be limited to assist in providing care to adults and children diagnosed as periodontally healthy or with gingivitis.

DENTAL ASSISTANT

EDUCATION — Formal education program or on-the-job training (OJT). Formal programs vary in length. Credentials may be obtained (such as Certified or Registered Dental Assistant) but neither ensures more dental care may be performed versus OJT.

ROLE — Assists dentist to carry out treatment plan for patient, but with the most limited scope.

SUPERVISION — May work only under the direct supervision of the dentist and may not be delegated care that requires an EFDA permit.

CAREER — Dental Assistants provide many valuable services. However, without EFDA upskilling a Dental Assistant is limited in the types of care they may assist with. This role is important as an entry into careers within the dental profession, and additional continuing education and certification opportunities are available.

DIRECT SUPERVISION — The dentist has authorized the procedure for a patient of record, remains in the treatment facility and evaluates the procedure prior to patient dismissal.

INDIRECT SUPERVISION — The dentist has authorized the procedure for a patient of record and remains in the treatment facility while the procedure is performed.

GENERAL SUPERVISION — The dentist has authorized the procedure for a patient of record and which does not require the physical presence of the dentist in the treatment facility during the performance of the procedure. The patient must be informed that the dentist is not in the treatment facility and the authorization is valid only 12 months from the most recent examination.

PATIENT OF RECORD — One for whom the dentist has obtained a relevant history, performed an examination and evaluated the condition to be treated.