Variation in Dental Hygiene Scope of Practice by State

The purpose of this graphic is to help planners, policymakers, and others understand differences in legal scope of practice across states, particularly in public health settings.

Research has shown that a broader scope of practice for dental hygienists is positively and significantly associated with improved oral health outcomes in a state’s population.1,2


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This graphic describes the highest level of practice available to a dental hygienist in a state, including dental hygiene therapy. The graphic is for informational purposes only and scope of practice is subject to change. Contact the applicable dental board or your attorney for specific legal advice.

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Dental Hygiene Diagnosis
The identification of oral conditions for which treatment falls within the dental hygiene scope of practice, as part of a dental hygiene treatment plan.

Prescriptive Authority
The ability to prescribe, administer, and dispense fluoride, topical medications, and chlorhexidine.

Local Anesthesia
The administration of local anesthesia.

Supervision of Dental Assistants
The ability to supervise dental assistants when performing tasks within the dental hygiene scope of practice.

Direct Medicaid Reimbursement
The direct Medicaid reimbursement of dental hygiene services to the dental hygienist.

Dental Hygiene Treatment Planning
The ability of a dental hygienist to assess oral conditions and formulate treatment plans for services within the dental hygiene scope of practice.

Provision of Sealants Without Prior Examination
The ability of a dental hygienist working in a public health setting to provide sealants without prior examination by a dentist.

Direct Access to Prophylaxis from a Dental Hygienist
The ability of a dental hygienist working in a public health setting to provide prophylaxis without prior examination by a dentist.

Not Allowed / No Law

LEVEL OF SUPERVISION

Direct: The dentist is required to be physically present during the administration of local anesthesia by the dental hygienist.

Indirect: The dentist is required to be on the premises during the administration of local anesthesia by the dental hygienist.

General: The dentist is required to authorize the administration of local anesthesia by the dental hygienist but is not required to be on the premises during the procedure.


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