

CERTIFICATION FOR ASSISTANTS?

Dentists have to be licensed. Hygienists have to be licensed. Nail technicians have to be licensed. However, in Idaho the person who takes many of the radiographs and is responsible for the majority of the disinfection and sterilization in your office, is not required to have credentials or accountability.

There is a misconception that, if an assistant has graduated from school and has Expanded Functions, they hold the title of “Certified Dental Assistant”. This is an untruth. The Expanded Functions that are legal for a general chairside assistant in the state of Idaho are: Coronal Polishing, Pit and Fissure Sealants, Fabrication of Temporary Crowns, Polishing Restorations, Removal of orthodontic cement with a High Speed Handpiece, and Administration of Nitrous Oxide. Assistants are required to use State Board approved curriculum, and tests, to perform these functions. Obtaining a certificate in any of these functions qualifies the assistant to perform only that particular skill.

Certification is a completely different entity. It is administered by the Dental Assisting National Board or DANB. It is a nationally recognized rigorous test that covers General Chairside, Radiography, and Infection Control. Each component is one third of the test. Applicants must pass all three components to use the title of “Certified Dental Assistant.” DANB also requires 12 CEUs per year to maintain a CDA. CEUs can be obtained in a variety of ways: updated CPR (required), attend professional meetings, complete courses, and read professional journal articles.

Our patients deserve a safe and reliable level of excellence and accountability. Without accountability, any one can claim to be a Certified Dental Assistant or to have expanded function training. Many assistants in Idaho are paying exorbitant amounts and receiving insufficient, unapproved, and potentially dangerous training in general chairside skills, radiography and infection control. This is a huge disservice to the students and to the public.

When the State Board of Dentistry passed the law requiring that assistants have their Expanded Functions certificates in order to perform those skills, the Center for Workforce training at local colleges and universities put the curriculum in place to train and test assistants. Assistants even in the most rural areas of Idaho took classes, tested, and received their expanded functions certificates. These classes are still available, as well as the prerequisite, Fundamentals of Dental Assisting, for on-the-job trained assistants who want to obtain their expanded functions.

The resources are available to allow every dental assistant in Idaho to become a Certified Dental Assistant. The Dental Assisting program at The College of Western Idaho is accredited by the American Dental Association’s Commission on Dental Accreditation. As part of our program, our students are required to take the Dental Assisting National Board exam. We are in the process of laying out the

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curriculum to accommodate assistants who would need to take courses to prepare for the DANB. They would be offered as online/hybrid courses so that assistants who are in remote areas of Idaho could be accommodated.

PUTTING A GRANT TO WORK FOR YOU!



Ashley Ford



Samantha O'Lea

This spring, through a grant from the American Dental Association, the ISDA has teamed with Red Sky Public Relations to launch a comprehensive communications and public affairs campaign for the ISDA members. Boise-based Red Sky has been assigned with the task of helping to position the ISDA as the authoritative voice on dental issues in Idaho. Additional tasks will include enhancing the visibility and reputation of the dental profession and targeting the needs of current members through public relations, marketing and public affairs events and initiatives.

With extensive experience in Health Care and Public Affairs, the qualified Red Sky Public Relations team will include Public Affairs Practice Group Leader, Ashley Ford and Public Relations Account Executive, Samantha O'Lea.

You can learn more about Red Sky at www.redskypr.com