



Professional Roles of the Dental Hygienist

Overview: The dental hygienist plays an integral role in assisting individuals and groups in achieving and maintaining optimal oral health. Dental hygienists provide educational, clinical, and consultative services to individuals and populations of all ages in a variety of settings and capacities. The professional roles of the dental hygienist include the following:

Clinician: Dental hygienists in a clinical role assess, diagnose, plan, implement, evaluate and document treatment for prevention, intervention, and control of oral diseases, while practicing in collaboration with other health professionals. Examples of clinical employment settings include:

- Private dental practices
- Community clinics
- Hospitals
- University dental clinics
- Prison facilities
- Nursing homes
- Schools

Corporate: Corporate dental hygienists are employed by companies that support the oral health industry through the sale of products and services. Leaders throughout the dental industry often employ dental hygienists due to their clinical experience and understanding of dental practice. Examples of corporate positions include:

- Sales Representatives
- Product Researchers
- Corporate Educators
- Corporate Administrators

Public Health: Community Health programs are typically funded by government or nonprofit organizations. These positions often offer an opportunity to provide care to those who otherwise would not have access to dental care. Examples of positions for dental hygienists in public health settings include:

- Clinician
 - Rural or inner city community clinics
 - Indian Health Service
 - Head Start programs
 - School sealant programs
- Administrator
 - State Public Health Officer
 - Community Clinic Administrator



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Researcher: Research conducted by dental hygienists can be either qualitative or quantitative. Quantitative research involves conducting surveys & analyzing the results, while qualitative research may involve testing a new procedure, product, or theory for accuracy, effectiveness, etc. Examples of employment settings for dental hygienist researchers include:

- Colleges and universities
- Corporations
- Governmental agencies
- Nonprofit organizations

Educator: Dental Hygiene educators are in great demand. Colleges and universities throughout the U. S. require dental hygiene instructors who use educational theory and methodology to educate a cadre of competent oral health professionals. Corporations also employ educators who provide continuing education to licensed dental hygienists. Examples of dental hygiene educators include:

- Clinical Instructors
- Classroom Instructors
- Program Directors
- Corporate Educators

Administrator: Dental hygienists in administrative positions apply organizational skills, communicate objectives, identify and manage resources, and evaluate and modify programs of health, education and health care. Examples of administrative positions held by dental hygienists include:

- Clinical Director, statewide school sealant program
- Program Director, dental hygiene program
- Executive Director, state association staff
- Research Administrator, university
- Director, corporate sales

Entrepreneur: By using imagination and creativity to initiate or finance new commercial enterprises, dental hygienists have become successful entrepreneurs in a variety of businesses. Some examples of business opportunities developed by dental hygienists include:

- Practice Management Company
- Product Development & Sales
- Employment Service
- CE Provider or Meeting Planner
- Consulting Business
- Founder of a Nonprofit
- Independent Clinical Practice
- Professional Speaker/Writer