



# Workforce Growth Initiatives

APRIL 2025

Over the past several years, the market need for oral health preventive and therapeutic services has outpaced the growth of the dental hygiene profession. ADHA is supporting numerous workforce growth initiatives to help meet the need. This report details the educational opportunities, collaborative meetings, recruitment initiatives, and research relevant to this important issue for the dental hygiene profession.

# Educational Opportunities

ADHA supports career advancement for dental hygienists in clinical practice offering numerous courses to address key topics to enhance skills as well as to assist in managing workplace issues. The following relevant courses are available on ADHA's [CE Smart Platform](#).

## Webinars: Live and On-Demand

- A Primer on Legal and Risk Management Concepts
- AAP: Importance of Soft Tissue Phenotype for Health
- Abuse, Neglect and Trafficking: Professional Responsibility
- ADHA24 Mental Health and Self-Care Workshop Bundle
- Analyzing and Combatting Bias in Dental Hygiene Care
- Antibiotic Stewardship Practices in Dentistry
- Bloodborne Pathogen Training
- Cannabinoids and What the Practicing Hygienists Needs to...
- Choosing the Best Homecare Tool for Cleaning Between Teeth
- Coming in September 2025 – Workforce Shortage Solutions!
- Compact Comparisons: Which is Best for Hygienists
- Conflict: Stop the Blame Game and Bust through to Solutions!
- Critical Connections: Perio Medicine & Systemic Disease
- Cultural Awareness and Belonging in Dental Hygiene
- Dental AI: Are Hygienists Ready? Results of the 2024 Survey
- Driving Change to be Everyday Extraordinary
- Effects of Ultrasonic Use on Hearing Loss in Hygienists
- Empowering Independence: A Journey to Professional Autonomy
- Finance for Entrepreneurial Endeavors
- Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention Training
- Get Found, Get Selected, Stay Connected
- How Money Works: Unlocking the Secrets to Financial Freedom
- How Money Works: Unlocking the Secrets to Financial Freedom
- Hygiene in the Digital Age: Navigating new Tech & AI
- Hygiene Retention in the Dental Practice
- Hygienists Eliminate Oral Diseases: A Vision for the Future
- Identification and Management of Your Patients with Dry Mouth
- If There's Smoke, There's Fire! Oral Health Concerns & EVALI
- Inclusive Dental: Build a Team & Practice for Neurodiversity
- Infection Prevention & Control 2023: What's New What's Not
- Leadership Summit: Advanced Concepts in Leadership Training
- Let's Fight Gingivitis NOW...The Future is in YOUR Hands
- Mental Health & Wellness for Dental Hygienists
- Partnering to Prevent Opioid Misuse: Critical Updates
- Prevalence of Workplace Cyberbullying among Hygienists
- Risks in Patient Care for Hygienists: Tips to Avoid Lawsuits
- Scaling to New Heights: The Future of Periodontology
- The ABCs of HbA1c: A review of In-Office Diabetes Testing
- The Dental Hygienist & Oral Cancer Diagnosis: What's My...
- ThinkBelieveDreamDo 2.0: Autonomy
- Why Emotional Intelligence is Key to Your Success



## Collaborative Meetings & Webinars

ADHA continues to meet with various dental organizations to discuss solutions to workforce shortage issues including:

- [American Dental Association](#)
- [Academy for General Dentistry](#)
- [American Dental Education Association](#)
- [Dental Assisting National Board](#)

## Chairside Recruitment Program Hygienist Inspired

The Hygienist Inspired Chairside Recruitment Program is designed to directly address workforce growth, increase diversity in the profession, and improve access to care to underserved communities. This program has launched in 9 pilot states: Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin, where ambassadors will lead state-wide recruiting efforts, conducting chairside recruitment in their operatories and participating in community events to raise awareness about careers in dental hygiene. Hygienist Inspired Allies will support the mission of the program by promoting dental hygiene careers, advocating for the profession's impact on oral health, and mentoring future hygienists.

ADHA is grateful to the Delta Dental Foundation of Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana for their support of this program.

Learn more at [adha.org/hygienistinspired](https://adha.org/hygienistinspired).



# Relevant Research

Since the pandemic, ADHA has been tracking research related to workforce shortages in dental hygiene practice and education. The following reports highlight information gleaned from key studies. The reports demonstrate consistency in findings and potential solutions.

## Second Annual State of Work Report

The dental hygiene workforce is shifting, with a stronger focus on financial stability, career flexibility, and managing burnout. Many registered dental hygienists are turning to temporary work as a strategic option while concerns about compensation and work-life balance continue to be top priorities. ADHA is grateful to GoTu for sharing their findings related to state of work for dental hygienists in 2025.

### Workforce Demographics & Career Longevity

The registered dental hygienist workforce consists of experienced professionals, with 23% having 20+ years of experience and 79% planning to remain in the field for at least another decade.

### Financial Well-Being & Compensation


Despite most registered dental hygienists earning \$41-\$60 per hour, 44% have not received a raise in two years, and 66% do not receive bonuses, contributing to widespread financial dissatisfaction.

### Workplace Satisfaction & Burnout Trends

Burnout and career mobility are key concerns for registered dental hygienists, with many seeking higher pay and better benefits, while others turn to temporary work for flexibility and stability.

### The Rise of Flexibility: Temporary & Non-Traditional Work

Registered dental hygienists are increasingly turning to temporary work for better pay and flexibility, with 28% identifying as a part-time or full-time temporary registered dental hygienist.



### Second Annual State of Work 2025

### Future of the Registered Dental Hygienist Profession

Registered dental hygienists are advocating for higher wages, better benefits, and improved workplace culture to enhance career longevity and job satisfaction.

The top 3 reasons registered dental hygienists seek job changes reflect a desire for greater control over their careers, income, and work environment.

1

Higher pay rates

2

Better benefits

3

More Flexibility in scheduling

### RDH WORKFORCE BY EXPERIENCE

20+ years	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
11-20 years	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
6-10 years	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
3-5 years	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

79% of RDHs anticipate staying in the field for more than 10 years.

Source: GoTu. (2025). Registered dental hygienist state of work report 2025. Retrieved from <https://lp.gotu.com/rdh-state-of-work.2025>



# Dental Hygiene Program Directors Survey

Program directors across the US were surveyed to examine barriers to increasing class size and diversifying student recruitment. ADHA is appreciates this research supported by the Michigan Health Council. Based on the [Dental Hygiene Program Survey Report](#).

Barriers to expanding class size include limited clinic space, hiring additional faculty, and faculty salaries are not on par with non-academic salaries.

**Recommendations for Faculty**  
Provide opportunities for program directors to seek graduate degrees and to work in their administrative capacity as long as they are enrolled in a graduate program; hire more part-time faculty to increase teaching especially on nights and weekends; offer childcare to working faculty; and develop career ladders that could offer advancements beyond clinic work.


Resources to improve recruitment efforts for underrepresented and disadvantaged students include financial assistance and childcare.

**Recommendations for Students**  
CODA update program requirements to expand clinical facilities available for instruction; provide online learning and local practice; offer flexible or part-time hours for instruction including nights, weekends, and part-time to help with childcare and work responsibilities; provide onsite childcare as an affordable option to help more students pursue their career.

Source: Michigan Health Council. (2025). Dental Hygiene Program Survey 2025: Results & Analysis. [https://www.mhc.org/files/ugd/24abcc\\_6a787803e307463fb24c3ce044760f95.pdf](https://www.mhc.org/files/ugd/24abcc_6a787803e307463fb24c3ce044760f95.pdf)

## 2023-24 CODA Dental Hygiene Report

Each year, the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) provides data reports related to dental hygiene education. This 2023-2024 CODA Dental Hygiene Report provides the most recent data related to dental hygiene education programs, enrollment, applications and graduates of dental hygiene programs.

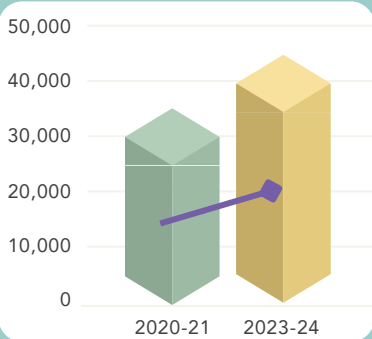


The number of dental hygiene education programs has increased to 346.

First year enrollment in dental hygiene programs has been increasing.

The enrollment in 2023-2024 is up from 2020-2021 and surpassed the 2013-2014 rate.

2023-24	8,967
2020-21	7,745
2013-14	8,287

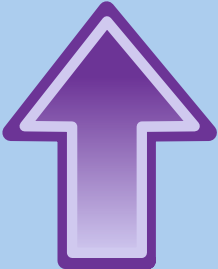



Applications to dental hygiene programs increased from 34,826 in 2020-21 to 43,390 in 2023-24.

Student acceptance increased from 9,371 in 2020-21 to 10,708 in 2023-24.

Total enrollment has increased to 17,057 in 2023-2024.

Enrollment was 16,079 in 2020-21 and has surpassed rate of 16,162 in 2013-14.





Graduates of dental hygiene programs rose to 7,132 in 2023-24. There were 7,002 graduates in 2020-21.

Source: Commission on Dental Accreditation. (2024). 2023-2024 Dental Hygiene Report. American Dental Association. <https://coda.ada.org/find-a-program>

# Dental Workforce Shortages Research – 2022

The American Dental Association Health Policy Institute, in partnership with the American Dental Hygienists' Association, American Dental Assistant Association, and the Dental Assisting National Board, conducted a study to assess workforce shortage issues. This national study provides information about job satisfaction, factors associated with retention and attrition, workforce longevity, and benefits.

Based on [Dental Workforce Shortages: Data to Navigate Today's Labor Market](#), here's what the research tells us.

### WORKFORCE LONGEVITY

Approximately two-thirds of the dental assistant (33.7%) and dental hygienist (31.4%) workforce indicate they expect to retire in five years or less.

### JOB SATISFACTION

The majority of dental assistants and dental hygienists are satisfied in their current job.

### WAGE INCREASES

Roughly half of dental assistants and dental hygienists indicate they have received a raise within the past year. The majority of wage increases are in the 1-3% range.

### FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH RETENTION AND ATTRITION

#### RETENTION FACTORS

Work-life balance, positive workplace culture, and ability to help patients.

#### ATTRITION FACTORS

Negative workplace culture, insufficient pay, lack of growth opportunities, inadequate benefits, and feeling overworked.

### RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION BENEFITS

The majority of dental assistants and dental hygienists indicated that they receive benefits, especially those where funds are rare overall. These benefits matter for recruitment and retention.

▶ Dental Benefits	▶ Health Insurance
▶ Paid Holidays	▶ Paid Sick Time
▶ Paid Vacation	▶ Paid Leave
▶ Retirement Savings	▶ Continuing Education

Source: ADA Health Policy Institute. (2022). Dental workforce shortages: Data to navigate today's labor market. In collaboration with American Dental Assistants Association, American Dental Hygienists' Association, Dental Assisting National Board, and IgniteDA. [https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/adaorganization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/hpi/dental workforce shortages labor market.pdf](https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/adaorganization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/hpi/dental%20workforce%20shortages%20labor%20market.pdf)