

Dear Registered Dental Hygienists of South Carolina,

We have been made aware that there is interest in the feasibility of bringing the Alabama Dental Hygiene Program (ADHP) model to South Carolina to address the shortage of dental hygienists in the state.

This letter is to address the ADHP model (preceptorship) as a possible solution to the shortage of dental hygienists in our state. “Preceptorship” in this context means that employer dentists (not educators) train their dental assistants to perform duties that are currently allowed to be performed only by licensed, registered dental hygienists who are graduates of CODA accredited dental hygiene schools.

WHAT IS ADHP?

* A preceptorship program for dental assistants to become licensed dental hygienists.
* A total of 10 months of didactic courses.
* After 2 WEEKENDS they begin clinical training, treating patients in their sponsoring dentist office.
* Their sponsoring dentists supervises their training. They must complete 150 prophies.
* They take a clinical exam, administered by CDCA-WREB-CITA at the end of their 10 months of coursework.
* They DO NOT take the NDHBE.
* ADHP graduates may perform the same duties as those that graduate from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program, including non-surgical periodontal therapy and administering anesthesia.
* They cannot be licensed outside of Alabama because the other 49 states require Dental Hygiene license applicants to have graduated from a CODA accredited program.

<https://dentalboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/22-23-Dentist-Instructor-Student-Manual-ADHP-2022-2023.pdf>

<https://dentalboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/BDEAL-2023-2024-ADHP-Lecture-Exam-Schedule-032023-FINAL.pdf>

Compare the above with the academic and clinical requirements you completed to graduate from a CODA accredited program and become a board-certified dental hygiene professional.

Research shows that the state of Alabama continues to have a shortage of dental hygienists despite ADHP.

Research by the American Dental Association shows that the top three reasons that

dental hygienists leave the profession are negative workplace culture, insufficient pay,

and feeling overworked.

<https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/resources/research/hpi/dental_workforce_shortages_labor_market.pdf?rev=e6025d77df184e6c95dc7cefde4adee3&hash=225FCBBCCB67174AAFC760FE2287322D>

We certainly sympathize with dentists who struggle to find staff. This is an issue across the

country in almost all industries. However, the first course of action should not be to

devalue education and the profession of dental hygiene. Keeping the standards that

are currently in place ensures that we can continue to provide quality oral healthcare to

all citizens of South Carolina.

SCDHA is meeting with proponents of the preceptorship concept and will also meet with a Task Force appointed by the Board of Dentistry to study ADHP and strategize solutions for the dental hygiene shortage in our state. Sherie Barbare, RDH was appointed by the Board to Chair the Task Force while Becky Marchi, RDH serves on it and chairs the Board of Dentistry Dental Hygiene Sub-Committee.

The South Carolina Dental Hygienists’ Association is committed to protecting our

profession, our patients, and our educational standards.

Please follow the link below to view an article about the dental hygienist shortage from

Today’s RDH by Spring Hatfield, RDH, BSHP:

Proposed Solutions and Why Assistants Scaling is Not the Answer

<https://www.todaysrdh.com/dental-hygienist-shortage-proposed-solutions-and-why-assistants-scaling-is-not-the-answer/>

For further information, please contact the SCDHA at <https://www.scdha.org/>. Or email us at scdhaquestions@gmail.com

Sincerely,

South Carolina Dental Hygienists’ Association

Line Officers