

# DENTAL ASSISTANT RESEARCH

November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021

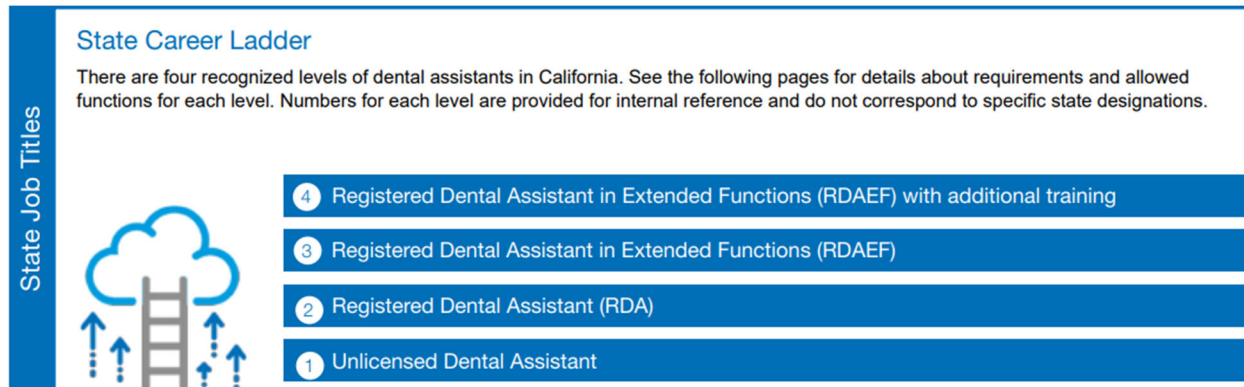
Contact: Nghi Nguyen, Workforce Data Analyst

Email: [nguyenn@stanworkforce.com](mailto:nguyenn@stanworkforce.com)

Phone: (209)558-2105

## I. Overview

### Type of Dental Assistant



*Source: "California 2020 Allowable and Prohibited Duties for Dental Assistants." Dental Assisting National Board, Inc.*

### 1. Unlicensed Dental Assistant

**1 Unlicensed Dental Assistant**

**Education, Training and Credential Requirements**

An **unlicensed dental assistant** in California may perform basic supportive dental procedures under the supervision of a licensed dentist specified by the state dental practice act.

The employer dentist must ensure that all unlicensed dental assistants maintain BLS certification, and that all unlicensed dental assistants in continuous employment for 120 days or more have proof of completing all of the following within a year from date of employment:

- I. A California Board-approved 2-hour course in the California Dental Practice Act  
**AND**
- II. A California Board-approved 8-hour course in infection control  
**AND**
- III. An AHA or ARC-approved course in Basic Life Support which includes hands-on simulated clinical scenarios

Requirements

*Source: "California 2020 Allowable and Prohibited Duties for Dental Assistants." Dental Assisting National Board, Inc.*

According to the Dental Board of California, Unlicensed dental assistants are not licensed by the Dental Board of California (Board), but they are subject to certain laws governing their conduct. Section 1085 is the regulation governing the duties that unlicensed dental assistants are allowed to perform. Unless a specific duty is listed in that regulations, the dental assistant is NOT allowed to perform that duty. A dental assistant may only expose radiographs after successful completion of a board-approved radiation safety course. Dental assistants with certain experience or educational backgrounds may qualify to apply for Registered Dental Assistant (RDA) licensure

## 2. Registered Dental Assistant in California

2 Registered Dental Assistant (RDA)

**Education, Training and Credential Requirements**

To be licensed as a **Registered Dental Assistant (RDA)** in California, one must:

- I.
  - a. Graduate from a California Board-approved RDA educational program OR
  - b. Complete 15 months of work experience as a dental assistant OR
  - c. Complete a combination of a non-approved educational program and work experience

**AND**
- II. Successfully complete California Board-approved courses in radiation safety and coronal polishing  
**AND**
- III. Successfully complete a 2-hour Board-approved course in the California Dental Practice Act and an 8-hour course in infection control within 5 years prior to application for licensure  
**AND**
- IV. Successfully complete an AHA or ARC-approved course in Basic Life Support  
**AND**
- V. Apply to the Dental Board of California for licensure as an RDA  
**AND**
- VI. Pass the state RDA Combined Written and Law and Ethics exam  
*(Note: Prior to 2015, a practical exam was required for RDA licensure. The practical exam was suspended in 2015 and permanently discontinued in November 2017. Beginning in May 2018, the state written RDA exam and the state written exam in law and ethics, formerly separate exams, have been combined.)*

*Source: "California 2020 Allowable and Prohibited Duties for Dental Assistants." Dental Assisting National Board, Inc.*

## 3. Certified Dental Assistant (Source: San Joaquin Valley College)

You don't need to be certified to be a dental assistant. However, dental assistant certification can help you gain additional technical skills and advance your career. Most dental assistants who want to gain certification take the Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) examination from the nationally-recognized Dental Assisting National Board (DANB). According to DANB's 2018-2019 Dental Assistants Salary and Satisfaction Survey, those with a CDA certification earned \$2 more per hour than dental assistants without certification<sup>9</sup>.

According to the DANB, the CDA exam consists of three components: General Chairside Assisting (GC), Radiation Health and Safety (RHS) and Infection Control (ICE)<sup>9</sup>. DANB also offers advanced certifications, such as the Certified Preventive Functions Dental Assistant (CPFDA) and Certified Restorative Functions Dental Assistant (CRFDA) certifications.

Note: Certified Dental Assistant is not Registered Dental Assistant. In **California**, it seems like a Certified Dental Assistant is like an Unlicensed Dental Assistant with certifications.

## Educational Requirements

In some states, you can become a CDA with only a high school diploma and an appropriate amount of on-the-job training. In other states, you'll need to complete either a certificate or an associate's program in dental assisting. These programs cover the essential knowledge of the dental sciences, including the clinical procedures necessary to become a dental assistant. You will also learn about infection control techniques, radiologic principles, and first aid practices.

*Source: learn.org*

## II. Job Postings in Stanislaus County

Time period: July 2019 – June 2021 (2 years). Parameter: Dental Assistant Occupation

### 1. Job Title

Table II.1 shows that the need for RDA seems higher than the need for general DA in the considered period. Except for the job title “Registered Dental Assistants,” there is no designation for “unlicensed dental assistant” in the below job list. Therefore, we don’t know if the remaining jobs in the list required the Registration or not.

The table also indicates that Registered Dental Assistants and Specialized Dental Assistants have higher Median Advertised Salary than the general Dental Assistants.

Job Title	Unique Postings from Jul 2019 - Jun 2021	Avg. Posting Intensity (Jul 2019 - Jun 2021)	Median Posting Duration from Jul 2019 - Jun 2021	Median Advertised Salary
Registered Dental Assistants	103	5 : 1	15	\$35,968
Dental Assistants	88	4 : 1	19	\$29,056
Orthodontists	9	2 : 1	11	\$40,560
Oral Surgery Assistants	9	2 : 1	43	\$41,600
Orthodontic Assistants	8	3 : 1	16	\$38,400
Orthodontic Dental Assistants	7	2 : 1	58	\$46,800
Unclassified	5	4 : 1	33	\$95,680
Dental Assistants/Registered Dental Assistants	4	2 : 1	3	Insf. Data
Endodontic Dental Assistants	4	4 : 1	60	Insf. Data
Expanded Function Dental Assistants	3	1 : 1	10	Insf. Data
Dental Assistants/Hygienists	3	1 : 1	6	\$29,120
Hygiene Coordinators	3	1 : 1	10	\$36,400
Pediatric Dental Assistants	3	1 : 1	10	Insf. Data
Experience Designers	2	1 : 1	62	Insf. Data
Company Trainers	2	1 : 1	7	Insf. Data
Dental Treatment Coordinators	2	2 : 1	100	\$36,400
Front/Back Office Medical Assistants	2	2 : 1	2	\$33,280
Front/Back Office Medical Assistants	2	2 : 1	1	\$31,720
Bilingual Dental Assistants	2	12 : 1	28	Insf. Data
General Practical Dental Assistants	2	4 : 1	8	Insf. Data
Oral Surgeon Assistants	2	3 : 1	35	Insf. Data

Figure II.1: Top job posting job titles for dental assistant occupation from July 2019 to June 2021 in Stanislaus County

## 2. Qualification

### Top Qualifications

Qualification	Postings with Qualification
Registered Dental Assistant	130
Radiology Certification	24
Expanded Functions Dental Assistant	12
Doctor Of Dental Surgery (DDS)	9
Certified Dental Assistant	6
Infection Control Certification	3
Doctor Of Dental Medicine (DMD)	1
Advanced Practice Registered Nurse	1
Certified Dental Technician	1
Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS)	1

Figure II.2: Top job posting qualifications for dental assistant occupation from July 2019 to June 2021 in Stanislaus County



Table II.2 shows the top qualifications required in the job postings. 130 of the job posts required that the candidate had to be a Registered Dental Assistant. 24 asked for a radiology certification. Radiology is an addition certification that a dental assistant needs to earn whether he or she is licensed or not.

State Radiography Requirements

### State Radiography Requirements

To legally operate dental x-ray equipment and perform dental radiographic procedures in California, a dental assistant must be state certified in radiography.

To apply for state certification, a dental assistant must:

- I. a. Successfully complete a California Board-approved radiation safety course which includes theory and clinical application in radiographic technique **OR**
- b. Have passed a radiation exam conducted by the California Board prior to Jan. 1, 1985

**AND**

- II. Submit a copy of the certificate of completion to the Dental Board of California

*Source: "California 2020 Allowable and Prohibited Duties for Dental Assistants." Dental Assisting National Board, Inc.*

The third important qualification is Expanded Functions Dental Assistant. To perform expanded functions under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist in California, a dental assistant must be licensed as a Registered Dental Assistant in Extended Functions (RDAEF)

**3 Registered Dental Assistant in Extended Functions (RDAEF)**

Requirements

### Education, Training and Credential Requirements

To perform **expanded functions** under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist in California, a dental assistant must be licensed as a **Registered Dental Assistant in Extended Functions (RDAEF)**.

To register as an RDAEF, one must:

- I. Hold a valid license as an RDA (see previous page for RDA licensure requirements)

**AND**

- II. Successfully complete a California Board-approved course for application of pit and fissure sealants

**AND**

- III. Successfully complete a California Board-approved extended functions educational program

**AND**

- IV. Apply to the Dental Board of California for licensure as a Registered Dental Assistant in Extended Functions

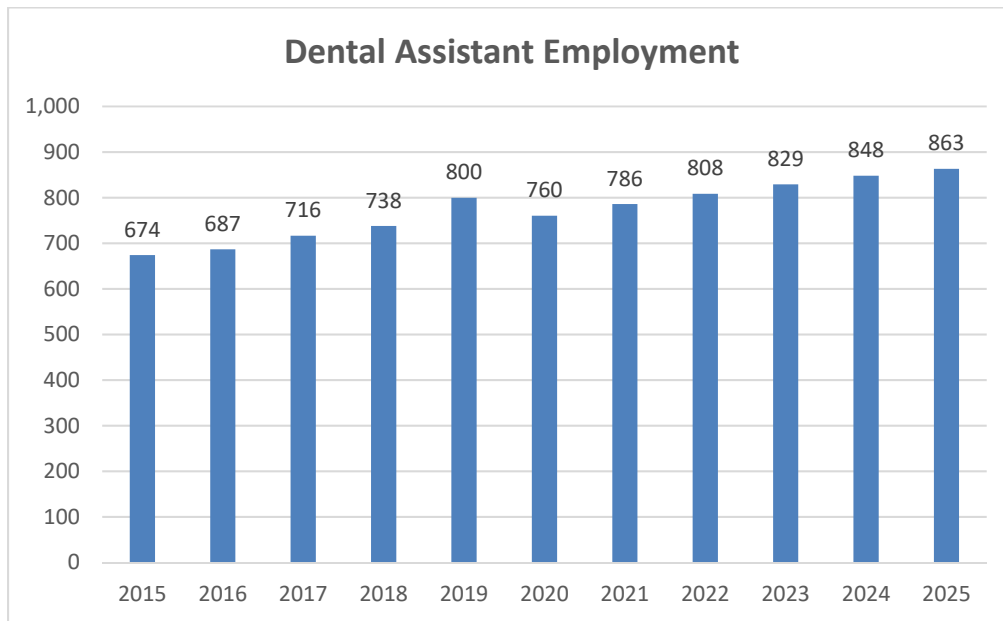
**AND**

- V. Pass a written, clinical, and practical exam administered by the California Board

*Source: "California 2020 Allowable and Prohibited Duties for Dental Assistants." Dental Assisting National Board, Inc.*

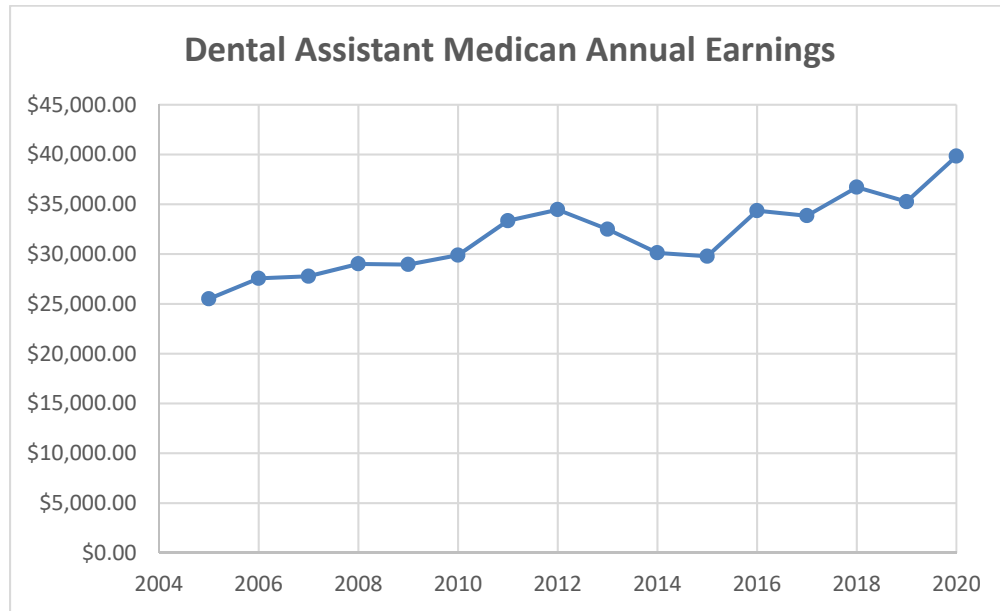
### III. Employment Trend

Figure III.1 shows the employment trend, both historical and predictive, of Dental Assistant in Stanislaus County from 2015 to 2025. The demand for dental assistants is expected to increase steadily in the next 4 years.



*Figure III.1: Employment Trend of Dental Assistant Occupation in Stanislaus County*

Figure III.2 shows the median annual earnings of a dental assistant in Stanislaus County from 2005 to 2020. The salary of dental assistants has the tendency to increase over time.



*Figure III.2: Median Annual Earnings Trend of Dental Assistant Occupation in Stanislaus County*

### References:

Dental Assisting National Board, Inc., 2020, *California 2020 Allowable and Prohibited Duties for Dental Assistants*.

[How to Become a Dental Assistant in California | SJVC](#)

[Unlicensed Dental Assistants - Dental Board of California](#)

[What is a Certified Dental Assistant \(CDA\)? \(learn.org\)](#)