

Dental Hygiene Practice in Community Settings Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Does the **NC Dental Practice Act** allow for Public Health Dental Hygienists as well as dental hygienists in private practice to work in the community and supervise Dental Assistant IIs?

- **Answer: Yes.**

Article 16, the Dental Hygiene Act to § 90-221. Definitions:

(f)"Supervision" as used in this Article shall mean that acts are deemed to be under the supervision of a licensed dentist when performed in a locale where a licensed dentist is physically present during the performance of such acts, except those acts performed under direction and in compliance with G.S. 90-233(a) or G.S. 90-233(a1), and such acts are being performed pursuant to the dentist's order, control and approval.

2. How can this new law be used in a private practice?

- **Answer:** Private practice dental hygienists working under **limited supervision** work as outlined in **§ 90-233 Practice of dental hygiene** (a1) and (a6)—further expounded in Rules 16Z. Dentists in private practice employing hygienists working under limited supervision must report to the NC Board of Dental Examiners the location of services, number of patients treated, services performed and the circumstances of any adverse events. This report is due at the time of licensing renewal.

3. How can this new law be used by a dental safety net provider?

- **Answer:** Public Health Dental Hygienists working under direction work as outlined in **§ 90-233(a) Practice of dental hygiene** and further expounded in Rules 16W.

4. Can the dental hygienist supervise more than one DAI in the clinical setting?

- **Answer:** No, any hygienist regardless of private practice or public health setting, may supervise "a" dental assistant.

By Statute for hygienists in private practice:

§ 90-233 Practice of dental hygiene

(a6) Dental hygienists performing procedures in accordance with subsection (a1) of this section may supervise a Dental Assistant who assists the hygienist in clinical procedures and is classified as a Dental Assistant II or permitted to perform functions of a Dental Assistant II pursuant to 21 NCAC 16H .0104(a) or (b).

By Rule for hygienists working in a dental safety net:

21 NCAC 16W .0104 DENTAL ACCESS SHORTAGE AREAS

(2) supervise a Dental Assistant who assists the public health hygienists in the procedures described in Subparagraph (a)(1) of this Rule. For purposes of this Rule, Dental Assistant means any person classified as a Dental Assistant II or permitted to perform functions of a Dental Assistant II pursuant to 21 NCAC 16H .0104(a) or (b).

5. How can I determine if an area is deemed to be a Dental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA)?
 - **Answer:** The NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, Oral Health Section worked with the Office of Rural Health to develop guidance for dental providers to follow so they can know if dental services will be offered in a Dental (HPSA). This guidance is posted on the NC Oral Health Section's website and is available at this link: [Dental Health Professional Shortage Area \(HPSA\) Policy](#).

6. For a North Carolina licensed dental hygienist to work as a Public Health Dental Hygienist, he or she needs to have 5 years' experience. How do you calculate that?
 - **Answer: 21 NCAC 16W .0102(b) TRAINING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH HYGIENISTS:**
(b) For purposes of this Rule, a minimum of 4,000 hours, the majority of which must be spent performing prophylaxis or periodontal debridement under the supervision of a licensed dentist, shall be equivalent to five years' experience in clinical dental hygiene.

7. In what type of community site may a community dental hygienist work remotely from his/her supervising dentist?
 - **Answer:** Such hygienists may perform procedures in public schools, nursing homes, rest homes, long-term care facilities, and rural and community clinics provided through federal, State, county, or local governments.

8. If a public health dental hygienist is in the fixed-site clinic when the dentist is not present, is she able to treat hygiene patients?
 - **Answer: Yes,** if the safety net dental clinic is in a Dental Health Professional Shortage Area and there is a standing order (for new patients) or an existing treatment plan that includes hygiene services.

9. In the example above, must the supervising dentist be working and available for professional consult, or could the dentist be on LEAVE and unavailable?
 - **Answer:** A supervising dentist must be available. However, it may be a different dentist than the one signing the original standing order as long as the "substitute" supervising dentist is fully informed of the standing order and is in agreement with it.

10. Can a public health dental hygienist work under the direction of a temporary dentist who has agreed to work part-time at the safety net dental clinic?
 - **Answer:** Yes, a part-time dentist may write standing orders for community hygienists to follow.

11. Will you explain the difference between the written order noted in 21 NCAC 16W .0101 and the term written standing order listed in 21 NCAC 16W .0104?

- **Answer:** Both written orders reference the supervising dentist's approved professional services that dental hygienists can offer without said dentist being present. The standing order may include only those duties that are delegable to a dental hygienist and do not require the presence of a dentist pursuant to 21 NCAC 16H .0203 and 21 NCAC 16G .0101.

12. Will you share a template for a Standing Order?

- **Answer:** See attachment at end of this document

13. For patients who have undergone treatment by dental teams in community settings, what is the time limitation for treatment completion and dental examination?

- **Answer:**

By Statute for hygienists in private practice:

(3) The dental hygiene functions directed to be performed in accordance with this subsection are conducted within 270 days of the dentist's standing order.

By Rule for hygienists working in a dental safety net:

(b) Public health hygienists working under supervision of a dentist in accordance with G.S. 90-233(a) and providing services at facilities identified in Paragraph (a) of this Rule who are performing services pursuant to a written standing order from the dentist must complete the procedures ordered within 270 days.

14. Can dental hygienists working in the community administer EpiPens, glucose, or other emergency response tools, including Automatic Electronic Defibrillators without onsite supervision of a dentist or other healthcare professional?

- **Answer:** Yes.

In emergency situations, dental hygienists are covered by the Good Samaritan Law and should respond at their highest level of training to sustain life.

15. What does it mean to be a patient of record?

- **Answer:** A patient of record is any patient of the clinic, starting with their first visit.
 - 1) A patient of record is considered a new patient, limited patient, or previous patient.
 - 2) A patient can be treated by the hygienist if they have never been seen by a dentist and such treatment will create a patient of record for the supervising dentist.
 - 3) As in similar cases, if the patient does not appear for the examination appointment, this should be documented and maintained in the patient record.

16. How can we get additional clarity to our questions, so our public health dental hygienists feel comfortable working under direction?

- **Answer:** Contact the NC State Board of Dental Examiners. www.ncdentalboard.org

Oral Health Section Public Health Dental Hygienists Hygiene Under Direction STANDING ORDER

Public Health Dental Hygienists employed by NC DHHS Oral Health Section may perform the following clinical procedures without a prior dental exam by their supervising dentist in community clinics and facilities located in areas identified by the Office of Rural Health as dental access shortage areas.

Procedures:

- Dental screening to identify teeth appropriate for preventive services.
- Application of dental sealants using non-aerosolizing procedures.
- Application of fluoride varnish to those who've received dental sealants.

Public Health Dental Hygienists in the western regions of the state are covered by this standing order. They include:

Region 1

Lori Nicholson	lori.nicholson@dhhs.nc.gov	828-557-0063
Kristal Cherry	kristal.cherry@dhhs.nc.gov	828-371-5138

Region 2

Kiley Dellinger	Kiley.Dellinger@dhhs.nc.gov	919-418-2654
Christina Burdette	Christina.Burdette@dhhs.nc.gov	919-441-2277

Region 3

Kim Middleton	kim.middleton@dhhs.nc.gov	336-301-0346
Laura McNeill	Laura.McNeill@dhhs.nc.gov	336-944-4732

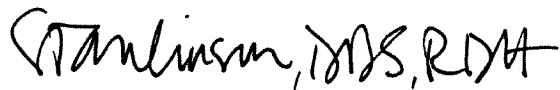
Region 4

Leslie Hatfield	Leslie.Hatfield@dhhs.nc.gov	919-817-0765
Michelle Reid	Michelle.Reid@dhhs.nc.gov	828-460-4366

Region 5

Tamara Hill	Tamara.Hill@dhhs.nc.gov	704-301-4742
Janet Crutchfield	Janet.Crutchfield@dhhs.nc.gov	704-473-4375

Upon initial clinical evaluation, hygienists have 270 days to offer dental preventive services on any patient before an exam is required.



Sarah Tomlinson, DDS, RDH
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State Dental Director
Oral Health Section Chief

Date- April 20, 2022

Standing Order Does Not Expire