

Reports of Infection Control/Sterilization Issues

As dental offices have re-opened across the state the Dental Board has received numerous reports of offices not taking proper infection control/sterilization actions to combat the spread of COVID-19. Most of these reports come to us by phone from patients who may not be familiar with infection control protocols and whose report, if true, would amount to nothing more than a minor, technical, or inadvertent oversight that is highly unlikely to cause harm to patients or staff.

Board members and Board staff are very eager for these minor incidents to remain minor and are requesting your help. Rather than encouraging these callers to file an official complaint, which would require a Board investigation, Board staff are simply calling dentists to relay what has been reported to us. While we may not have all the facts and we recognize the patient may not know the current recommendations, this will allow the dentist and office staff to know that a concern has been raised and give the office an opportunity to address the issue without going through a formal investigative process.

Therefore, if you get a call from the Dental Board about an alleged infection control violation do not panic. We really are attempting to address concerns of the public in the most efficient and effective way possible. We are confident that once you know a report has been made, you can take any necessary corrective actions without delay.

In the meantime, it may be helpful to let your patients know how your office protocols have changed in response to the pandemic. Texts, emails, website announcements, in-office placards, posters, or any means you normally use to contact your patients may be useful in explaining all that you are doing to keep patients and staff safe. This type of information might address concerns before they arise and help patients have appropriate expectations prior to entering the office.

Thank you and be sure to stay abreast of the latest updates from the CDC, OSHA, and the ADA as you continue to provide dental services to your patients. Also, if you become aware of a patient or staff member that tests positive for COVID-19, please refer to the most recent information from DHHS and the CDC:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html>

<https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/guidance/healthcare/COVID-19-Provider-Guidance-Final.pdf>