

DENTAL ASSISTANT

Certificate of Completion

Dental assisting is a rewarding profession. Dental assistants are people who like helping others, enjoy working closely with patients and other members of the dental team. Dental assistants frequently are relied on as the dentist's "other set of hands." Thus constantly challenging the dental assistant to expand and grow their knowledge and skill sets.

There is no lack of variety in the types of tasks that dental assistants perform. Some of the skills dental assistants perform include:

- prepare equipment, materials, and instruments for patient care;
- perform sterilization and disinfection procedures;
- provide patients with instructions both before and after dental procedures ;
- create temporary crowns, bleaching trays, custom trays, & custom fitted sport mouth guards;
- provide coronal polishing and fluoride treatments
- place pit & fissure sealants;
- take impressions of teeth;
- take patient vital signs, record or review medical histories and medications;
- provide individualized oral hygiene instruction for patients and/or parents:
- create study casts (molds);
- expose, develop, and mount dental radiographs;
- anticipate dental provider needs for patient procedure
- perform a variety of other duties surrounding patient care, infection control, and radiology

They may also be responsible for administrative tasks, such as billing, patient verification, scheduling of various types of treatment appointments, ordering and material inventory.

Assistants may work in a general-practice office where a dentist provides multiple types of treatment, including restorative/operative work (fillings), prosthetics (crowns, bridges, and dentures), and perhaps some surgery. They may want to specialize for work in periodontics, oral and maxillofacial surgery, endodontics, pedodontics, or orthodontics.

In the state of New Mexico, dental assistants can become certified to perform the following expanded duties:

- radiology (taking x-rays),
- coronal polishing (polishing of teeth and removal of stains),
- fluoride treatments (the act of placing fluoride on a patient's teeth), and
- sealant placement (used to prevent decay).

These certifications are obtained through the State Dental Board and are a portion of the Dental Assisting National Board Certification Exam.

The Dental Assistant program at DACC is nationally accredited by the American Dental Association, Commission on Dental Program Accreditation. It is also recognized by the New Mexico State Board of Dentistry as a continuing-education provider.

Important Facts About This Certificate Program

Course Fees

In addition to tuition, a course fee of \$250 is charged for DAS 115 (<https://catalogs.nmsu.edu/search/?P=DAS%20115>) Dental Radiology.

Required Skills and Abilities

Students will need to demonstrate good oral expression (speech clarity) and written comprehension in English, critical thinking skills, near vision, and physical stamina (e.g., the ability to stand for long periods of time), as well as the ability to manipulate dental/medical equipment, move/lift patients and equipment up to 50 pounds without assistance, and perform patient care procedures with manual dexterity.

Program Admission Special Requirements

The Dental Assistant program is a limited-entry, special-application program. When a candidate is considered for acceptance into the program, the following factors are taken into account:

- High school and/or college transcripts and a minimum GPA of 2.8, however, most admitted candidates have a 3.0 or higher.
- Proof of county residency
- Essay or resume assignment submission (in accordance with rubric and instructions included in packet)
- Copy of current healthcare provider CPR card and proof of current immunizations
- Completion of English, communication, and biology courses with a C- or better, prior to applying to the program.
- Acknowledgment of physical capabilities required of a dental assistant
- Completion of program application (submitted by deadline)

Website: <https://dacc.nmsu.edu/academics/programs/dental-programs/>