

Expanded Function Dental Assistant Approved by the General Assembly and Governor

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The Governor signed into law SB589, sponsored by Senator Neil Anderson from Rock Island, which was an Illinois State Dental Society initiative that created a new designation for a dental assistant who has completed additional training in specific expanded functions. The new level of dental assistant will be defined as an Expanded Function Dental Assistant (EFDA) and can use the designation after being certified that they have completed the approved courses. The new language in the Illinois Dental Practice Act creating an EFDA is as follows:

Sec. 17.1. Expanded function dental assistants.

(a) A dental assistant who has completed training as provided in subsection (b) of this Section in all of the following areas may hold himself or herself out as an expanded function dental assistant:

- (1) Taking material or digital final impressions.*
- (2) Performing pulp vitality test.*
- (3) Placing, carving, and finishing of amalgam restorations and placing, packing, and finishing composite restorations.*
- (4) Starting the flow of oxygen and monitoring of nitrous oxide-oxygen analgesia.*
- (5) Coronal polishing and pit and fissure sealants, as currently allowed by law.*

After the completion of training as provided in subsection (b) of this Section, an expanded function dental assistant may perform any of the services listed in this subsection (a) pursuant to the limitations of this Act.

(b) Certification as an expanded function dental assistant must be obtained from one of the following sources: (i) an approved continuing education sponsor; (ii) a dental assistant training program approved by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association; or (iii) a training program approved by the Department.

Training required under this subsection (b) must also include Basic Life Support certification, as described in Section 16 of this Act. Proof of current certification shall be kept on file with the supervising dentist.

(c) Any procedures listed in subsection (a) that are performed by an expanded function dental assistant must be approved by the supervising dentist and examined prior to dismissal of the patient. The supervising dentist shall be responsible for all dental services or procedures performed by the dental assistant.

(d) Nothing in this Section shall be construed to alter the number of dental assistants that a dentist may supervise under paragraph (g) of Section 17 of this Act.

(e) Nothing in this Act shall: (1) require a dental assistant to be certified as an expanded function dental assistant or (2) prevent a dentist from training dental assistants in accordance with the provisions of Section 17 of this Act or rules pertaining to dental assistant duties.

There are two new expanded functions that will require a training program to be developed before a dental assistant can complete the full array of courses and achieve the EFDA designation. Taking material or digital final impressions and performing pulp vitality tests. These courses will be developed between now and the time the law goes into effect which is January 1, 2018.

To be clear, the training provided above must be completed in all areas before the dental assistant can be considered an EFDA and take final impressions or do pulp vitality testing. It is NOT à la carte.

The Practice Act will still allow a dentist to continue choosing to send a dental assistant to the previously approved expanded function courses found in section 17 of the Act, which includes coronal polishing and pit and fissure sealants, monitoring of nitrous oxide and placing, packing, and finishing composite and amalgam restoration after the rule providing appropriate training for both is amended and approved by the Department and the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR). Two additional provisions were contained in SB589 that now become effective in January 2018. A dentist may authorize their dental assistant to remove loose, broken, or irritating orthodontic appliances on a patient of record for the purpose of eliminating pain or discomfort without the dentist being physical present in the office at the time of the service.

And finally, an issue dealing with international graduates developed during the session, and language was added to the Act to strengthen the current requirement that an international graduate must complete two academic years of general dental clinical training to put them on par with U.S. students. Language was added that, as a result of the two-year training program, the student would then be eligible for a DDS degree or a DMD degree or meet program requirements developed and approved by the Department. This was added in case something develops in the future that would qualify them for licensure but would still allow for input by ISDS and the legislature.