

# Career Outlook

The dental assistant is a valuable member of the dental team and has numerous responsibilities. In smaller practices, the assistant might work with the dentist as well as managing the business aspects of the practice such as scheduling, billing and purchasing. In larger practices, the duties may be more specialized. In most dental offices, the dental assistant is in charge of infection control procedures, which are closely regulated by OSHA (the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration).

The dental assistant works on behalf of the patient as well as the dentist in helping to assure a high level of professional excellence in oral health care delivery. Procedures a dental assistant may perform are regulated on a state- by-state basis. In North Carolina, the dental assistant works under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist. A dental assistant may work in such practice settings as:

- Private Practice - General Practice and Specialties
- State Institutions - Prison System, Public Health Organizations
- Marketing - Sales Companies
- Research
- Consulting
- Education

Some general responsibilities of a dental assistant are:

- Assisting the dentist with a variety of treatment procedures -working with dental instruments and material
- Helping patients feel comfortable before, during and after dental treatment
- Taking and processing radiographs
- Preparing and sterilizing instruments and equipment
- Communicating with patients, other health professionals, dental suppliers, business contacts and insurers
- Performing a variety of office management tasks

North Carolina delegable functions for dental assistants can be found at the following website: <http://www.ncdentalboard.org/assisting.htm>

[The Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) has some specific details if you are interested in things like number of jobs, work environment, median annual wage, etc.