

Community College of Rhode Island

Technical Standards – Dental Assisting Program and Essential Functions for the Dental Assistant

Introduction:

Technical Standards are all of the nonacademic functional abilities that are essential for the delivery of effective and safe patient care. Technical standards are published, discipline specific fundamentals, critical for the safe and reasonable practice of Dental Assisting. They also protect qualified persons with disabling conditions against discrimination. Dental Assistants are in physical contact and close physical space while performing supportive procedures and providing treatment in a patient's mouth.

Technical Standards are a concrete statement of the minimum physical, sensory/motor, communication, behavioral/social, mental/emotional and environmental requirements for normal and safe professional function. They are intended to inform the prospective student/professional of the attributes, characteristics and abilities essential to practice as a dental assistant. Professional competency is the summation of many cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills. The College has a moral and ethical responsibility to select, educate and certify competent and safe students and practitioners. Patient's health and safety is the sole benchmark against which we measure all performance requirements, including the Technical Standards addressed in this document.

An Applicant Certificate of Understanding of Technical Standards must be signed at orientation. Students who have a documented disability should contact Disability Services for Students (DSS) as soon as possible. Registration with DSS is required before any accommodation requests will be granted. After registering with DSS, the student and DSS will collaborate to identify to what extent reasonable accommodations may exist that will enable the student to meet both the academic and technical standards of the program without lowering programmatic expectations. Reasonable accommodations will be directed toward providing an equal educational opportunity for students with disabilities while adhering to the professional standards of what is expected of all dental assisting students. As stated in the syllabi of all dental assisting courses, any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with the professor within the first two weeks of class. Under no circumstances will the Dental Assisting Program waive any essential course requirements or technical standards for any student with or without a disability. A Student must meet all technical standards with reasonable accommodations. The technical standards listed below identify the skills and behaviors necessary to successfully complete the dental assisting curriculum and adequately prepare our students for the practice of dental assisting.

Motor Skills/Manual Dexterity

Students must have full manual dexterity including adequate functioning of arms, wrists, hands and fingers. Appropriate psychomotor skills, manual dexterity and motor movement skills are necessary to render supportive procedures and provide treatment in a patient's mouth, while possessing the physical strength to move oneself into a position that will enable the student to provide appropriate dental care to the patient. A person with certain musculoskeletal conditions may have difficulty performing the daily activities required by the profession of dental assisting. These include, but are not limited to degenerative conditions or injuries to the neck, back, shoulder, elbow, wrist and/or hands. Examples:

herniated or bulging disks, chronic rotator cuff symptoms, and carpal tunnel. It is recommended that individuals with any of these conditions be evaluated by their physician prior to pursuing this profession.

The student must be able to:

- Use personal protective devices (tolerate face mask, safety eyewear, surgical gloves and laboratory coat)
- Carry out OSHA infection control procedures using cleaners and chemicals
- Manipulate dental materials, equipment and instruments with eye-hand coordination with both hands
- Demonstrate fine and gross motor skills
- Access a patient from a seated or standing position
- Sit unassisted for long periods of time
- Operate switches, knobs, levers in operation of the dental chair and accessory equipment in all clinics and laboratory settings
- Exhibit sufficient motor function to elicit information from a patient by palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other diagnostic modalities
- Perceive and interpret tactile vibrations appropriately
- Manipulate small objects of materials, paying close attention to fine detail
- Manipulate dental radiographic equipment unassisted
- Perform basic life support including CPR
- Transfer and position patients with disabilities
- Be comfortable working in small or confined spaces

Sensory Skills/ Observation Skills

A functional use of all senses is required. Visual acuity and intellectual ability are necessary to acquire information from documents such as charts, radiographs, small print, handwritten notations and computer screens and images. Appropriate depth perception and the ability to see clearly between a depth of 16-22 inches with or without corrective lenses is essential.

A student must be able to:

- Demonstrate adequate depth
- Observe demonstrations at a distance and close at hand
- Perform procedures in the classroom, clinic area and laboratory setting
- See fine detail, focus at several distances, discern variations in color, shape and texture in order to differentiate abnormal and normal
- Discern tactile sensations to perceive and interpret information associated with clinic procedures
- Visually assess, bimanually palpate hard and soft anatomic structures
- Differentiate between shades of gray on radiographs to determine quality and identify anatomy

AUDITORY (HEARING) OBSERVATION:

Hearing abilities must be sufficient to allow the student to communicate with and evaluate patients. The student must be able to:

- Evaluate stethoscope sounds in the monitoring of blood pressure
- Hear normal speaking level sounds and various voice ranges
- Hear auditory alarms and telephones
- Develop reasonable skills of percussion and auscultation

Intellectual Skills/Conceptual and Cognitive Skills

Consistent, accurate and quick integration of information is required especially in an emergency situation.

The Student must:

- Possess the ability to learn, interpret, integrate, analyze and synthesize data
- Possess the intellectual abilities required to carry out reasoning, analysis, problem solving, critical thinking, self-evaluation and lifelong learning
- Be able to comprehend three dimensional and spatial relationships
- Comprehend and integrate knowledge from didactic courses and professional literature into the assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of dental assisting procedures
- Demonstrate long and short term memory

Communication Skills

The Student must:

- Communicate effectively with patients, colleagues and faculty in verbal, nonverbal, and written form
- Possess sufficient command of the English language in order to retrieve information from lectures, textbooks, and exams
- Be able to obtain an accurate medical/dental history
- Be able to accurately record findings in patients records
- Demonstrate English language communication skills sufficient for interaction with others in verbal and written form (communication is clear and understandable to others)

Behavioral/Social/Mental/Emotional Skills

High levels of emotional and mental stability are required on a daily basis. A Student must possess the emotional health and mental stability necessary to:

- Demonstrate respect and caring for patients, peers, staff, and faculty

- Interact with peers, patients, staff and faculty in an emotionally stable, professional, and ethical manner
- Demonstrate respect for the diversity of cultures among college personnel, dental health professionals, externship site patients and peers
- Demonstrate a team approach in carrying out responsibilities in all settings
- Endure physically taxing workloads
- Function effectively under stress
- Adapt to changing environments by displaying flexibility
- Display compassion, integrity, concern for others, respect, strong interpersonal skills
- Be tactful and congenial
- Be able to accept criticism and respond by appropriate modification of behavior
- Be able to interrelate among colleagues, staff, and patients with honesty, integrity, professionalism and nondiscrimination
- Exercise good judgement
- Promptly complete responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients, and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients
- Respect the confidentiality of patient privacy
- Monitor His/her emotions. Manage strong emotions (such as response to stress) in a professional manner
- Perform multiple responsibilities concurrently
- Adapt to a changing environment/stress and deal with the unexpected (such as a crisis situation)

Other Skills

Student must demonstrate the ability to arrive at their clinical assignments on time and meet the programmatic requirements in a timely, professional and competent manner.

I attest that with proper training see no reason why I am not capable of performing the technical standards expected of a student in the CCRI Dental Assisting Program as outlined above with or without reasonable accommodations.