

New Hampshire Board of Dental Examiners
Declaratory Ruling: Dental Assistants Duties – Taking Vital Signs

This declaratory ruling is issued to the Petitioner with respect to the particular circumstances and facts discussed herein and represents a holding of the Board on those circumstances and facts for Petitioner only.

BACKGROUND

On April 4, 2016, the Board considered a question from an individual currently attending school to become a dental assistant. The Board considered the question as a petition for declaratory ruling. The individual asked if she could take vital signs, such as pulse, respiration and blood pressure before taking the Preliminary Inspection of the Oral Cavity. On April 4, 2016, the Board voted to issue the following declaratory ruling.

FACTS AND LAW

Den 302.05 provides, in relevant part, as follows:

Den 302.05 Qualification in Specific Area.

- (a) Any dental assistant who is 18 years of age or older, or dental hygienist shall be considered qualified in a specific area if he or she has successfully completed an expanded duty course, or successfully challenged an examination in same, or both, as stated in Den 302.05 (a) through (ag). Board approval of a course or exam given by an entity other than the board itself shall include approval of the passing grade or other standard for successful completion of said course or exam set by the entity giving said course or exam. Course records, pursuant to Den 403.06, and a certificate of course completion shall be retained by the course participant and provided to the board upon request by the board. **Dental assistants, other than graduate dental assistants, before qualifying in any other area addressed in Den 302.05, shall qualify to perform a preliminary inspection of the oral cavity as stated in Den 302.05 (e), and qualify in infection control in the dental office as stated in Den 302.05 (ag).** (Emphasis added).

Den 401.02 provides, in relevant part, as follows:

Den 401.02 Certified Dental Assistants' and Graduate Dental Assistants' Duties. Dental assistants who have completed the certification process of the Dental Assisting National Board and dental assistants who have graduated from CODA accredited school of dental assisting may, in addition to the duties of assistants, perform the following duties under direct supervision as defined in Den 101.06 and arranged by degree of supervision in Den 302.02:

- (g) Take and record blood pressure;

DECLARATORY RULING

At its April 4, 2016 meeting, the Board voted that a dental assistant may take vital signs of a patient before taking a Preliminary Inspection of the Oral Cavity course.

Den 302.05(a) makes it clear that Preliminary Inspection of the Oral Cavity must be taken before qualifying in any other area addressed in Den 302.05. Taking vital signs of a patient is not an area which is "addressed" in Den 302.05. Further, Den 401.02 makes it clear that only registered and certified dental assistants are qualified to take blood pressure, which is one of the vital signs of a patient.

Voted as approved by the Board on April 4, 2016.

Signature: Constance N. Stratton
Constance N. Stratton, Executive Director
Authorized Representative for the Board