

## **Recommended Changes for Scopes of Practice and Registration Process**

### **Summary of Recommended Changes**

For dentists:

- Authorize to administer Botox for dental as well as cosmetic purposes with certification
- Authorize to administer dermal fillers with certification
- Authorize to place and remove dental implants

For dental assistants:

- On Registration:
  - Repeal the registration requirement for Level I Dental Assistants
- On Scope of Practice:
  - Authorize Level I Dental Assistants to take radiographs with certification
  - Authorize Level II Dental Assistants to perform coronal polishing with certification
  - Authorize Level II Dental Assistants to place pit and fissure sealants with certification
- On Registration Fees:
  - Reduce the initial registration fee from \$190 to \$100
  - Reduce the fee to upgrade registration to Level II or Level III if for the same registration period as the current registration:
    - Reduce fee from \$190 to \$75
    - Waive background check requirement
- On the Application Period:
  - Extend the application period from 90 days to 120, with an allowance for when the applicant is making a good faith effort to complete the process (e.g., has submitted paperwork and is awaiting a decision or response from the Board of Dentistry)
  - Extend the 90 Practice Letter to 120 days (allows the applicant to practice while their application is under review).
- On the Removal of Redundant Registration Requirements for Level III Dental Assistants:
  - Graduation from a CODA accredited educational program for dental assistants.
  - Successfully passed a Board-approved, hands-on course in the functions and duties permitted to be performed by a Level III Dental Assistant.
  - Current certification from DANB as a Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) in general duties.
  - Current certification as a DANB Certified Preventive Functions Dental Assistant.

## **Explanation of Recommended Changes**

### **Authorizing dentists to administer Botox and dermal fillers for both dental as well as cosmetic purposes (with certification)**

A limited authorization was included in draft legislative language for the “Dental Specialties Licensure and Scope of Practice Amendment Act of 2023” approved by the Board of Dentistry on November 16, 2022.

Dentists are well suited to administer botulinum toxin injections (e.g., Botox) because of their extensive training on and knowledge of facial anatomy, muscles, and nerves. Dentists routinely administer intraoral injections. Following the completion of specific training on the use of FDA-approved neurotoxins, there should be no reasonable basis to object to authorizing dentists to administer injections of those substances on safety grounds. This authorization should also include the ability of dentists to administer dermal fillers given their extensive knowledge of facial anatomy, muscles and nerves. Such authorization would move the District into closer alignment with our neighbors with respect to the ability to use Botox and dermal fillers in treatment.<sup>1</sup>

### **Authorizing dentists to place and remove dental implants**

This authorization was included in draft legislative language for the “Dental Specialties Licensure and Scope of Practice Amendment Act of 2023” approved by the Board of Dentistry on November 16, 2022, and would recognize a core function for dentists.

### **Repealing the registration requirement for Level I Dental Assistants**

This District is at a disadvantage with its neighbors because Maryland and Virginia only require dental assistants who perform advanced functions to register with their respective dental boards. In contrast, every dental assistant who practices in DC must register with the Board of Dentistry regardless of the level at which they practice or the functions they perform. This obstacle was acknowledged in the verbal comments made by Dr. Michelle Latortue in her answers to questions posed by the Committee on Health during the March 5 Oversight Hearing.

### **Reducing the initial registration fee for Dental Assistants from \$190 to \$100**

In her testimony during the DC Council Committee on Health’s March 5 Oversight hearing, Dr. Michelle Latortue drew attention to the significant disparity between the fees required to register in the District versus Maryland and Virginia, as shown in the following table “Comparison of Registration Fees for Dental Assistants.”

Reducing registration fees for Dental Assistants provides numerous advantages over the current fee structure, including:

- Improving access to dental care by increasing the supply of qualified Dental Assistants.
- Making the District more competitive with respect to the development of the health care workforce with registration fees that are closer to those in Maryland and Virginia.
- Making the pathway to the middle class provided by working as a Dental Assistant more accessible.

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<sup>1</sup> In Virginia, dentists are authorized to administer botulinum toxin (i.e., Botox) injections for dental purposes. In 2023, Virginia enacted legislation to expand the ability of dentists to administer Botox to include cosmetic purposes ([§ 54.1-2711.2](#)). The enacting regulations are in the approval process. [In Maryland](#), dentists are authorized to use Botox, dermal fillers and similar drugs within the definition of dentistry.

### Comparison of Registration Fees for Dental Assistants

	District of Columbia	Maryland	Virginia
Registration Fee	All Dental Assistants must register: Level I, Level II & Level III  \$190 Initial \$75 Renewal	No Registration for Base Level Dental Assistants  \$20 Initial <sup>2</sup> \$68 Renewal <sup>3</sup>	No Registration for Dental Assistants I  \$100 Initial <sup>4</sup> \$50 Renewal
Background Check	\$50	N/A	N/A
Total Fees	\$240	\$20 / \$68	\$100 / \$50

#### **Reducing the fee when a Dental Assistant applies to upgrade their registration to Level II or Level III if for the same registration period as their current registration**

We recommend that the fee to move up in level for a Dental Assistant be reduced from \$190 to \$75 when the registration is for the period as their current registration. This is akin to a renewal.

As noted in previous comments, in addition to expanding access to dental care, the ability to work as a Dental Assistant in the District provides a pathway to the middle class for many residents. Likewise, when registered a Dental Assistant moves up from Level I to Level II or from Level II to Level III, their ability to provide dental care to the public is increased all while improving their financial stability. At the same time, the administrative burden on the Board of Dentistry staff to process an application to register at a higher level is significantly reduced from what is required to process an initial application. The attachment “Comparison of Registration Requirements for Dental Assistants in Washington, D.C.” lists those documents required for all initial registrations as a Dental Assistant regardless of level:

- Two (2) recent 2x2 passport type headshot photos of applicant.
- One (1) photocopy of a current government issued photo ID.
- Criminal Background Check (CBC). The CBC is completed at the time you submit your online application. A \$50 payment must be submitted online with the application for each level (Level I, Level II and Level III). The applicant will receive an email with a code to schedule a fingerprint appointment.
- Copy of a Current Basic CPR/BLS/First Aid Certification.
- Character Reference Form Link: [Character Reference Form](#). Must provide 3 character references with contact information.
- Application and License Fee - \$190.00 for registration at each level (Level I, Level II and Level III).
- Official Copy of High School Diploma or G.E.D.

<sup>2</sup> [Registration application](#) for a Dental Assistant Qualified in General Duties, an equivalent to a DC Level II Dental Assistant.

<sup>3</sup> [Renewal application](#) for Dental Radiation Technologist Certificate, an equivalent for a DC Level II Dental Assistant who is certified to take radiographs.

<sup>4</sup> See [Virginia Regulations Governing the Practice of Dental Assistants](#). In section 18VAC60-30-10 - Definitions, the regulations specifically define a Dental Assistant I as an “unlicensed person.” Fees for a Dental Assistant II to register and renew their registration are specified in section 18VAC60-30-30 - Required fees.

When a Dental Assistant moves up to Level II or Level III, only 2 or 3 additional requirements must be verified by Board of Dentistry staff as noted in the following table.

Additional Requirement for Level II Not Required for Level I	Additional Requirement for Level III Not Required for Level II
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successfully passed the DANB Radiation Health and Safety (RHS) examination or Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) examination</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successfully completed a Board-approved dental radiology training program consisting of at least twenty-four (24) hours of coursework in radiology, radiation safety, biology, and physics, and has successfully passed the examination(s) required for successful completion of the program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current certification as a <a href="#">DANB Certified Preventive Functions Dental Assistant</a></li> <li>Successfully passed a Board-approved, hands-on course in the functions and duties permitted to be performed by a Level III Dental Assistant</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduation from a CODA accredited educational program for dental assistants</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current certification from DANB as a <a href="#">Certified Dental Assistant</a> (CDA) in general duties</li> </ul>	<p>Both are required for a Level III. One of these must be verified for a Level II, so there is only one additional requirement of these for Level III.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduation from a CODA accredited educational program for dental assistants</li> </ul> <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current certification from DANB as a <a href="#">Certified Dental Assistant</a> (CDA) in general duties</li> </ul>

**Waiving the background check requirement when a Dental Assistant applies to upgrade their registration to Level II or Level III for the same registration period as their current registration**

DC Code requires that a criminal background check (CBC) be conducted before a registration is issued to a health professional. Given that DC regulations also require a CBC be conducted as part of the renewal process for health professionals, the de facto requirement is that a CBC be conducted every two years.

For those registered Dental Assistants applying to move up to a Level II or Level III, the current process requires a secondary or tertiary CBC sooner than every two years. In such limited cases, the CBC requirement should be waived. The applicants, who for whom a CBC was conducted when they registered or renewed at their current level, should not be required to incur the cost and delay in processing their application to satisfy a duplicative CBC. They pose no greater risk because they seek to move up to a Level II or Level III, and ironically, would not be required to undergo a CBC if they continued to practice at their current level.

**Authorizing Level I Dental Assistants to take radiographs with certification**

This recommendation aligns with statements by members and staff of the Board of Dentistry that work is underway within the Board's Regulatory Affairs Subcommittee to authorize Dental Assistants Level I to take radiographs.

**Authorizing Level II Dental Assistants to perform coronal polishing and to place pit and fissure sealants with certification**

Despite the creation of the position of Dental Assistant Level III in the DC Municipal Regulations and in the DC Code in 2024, according to the most recent Board of Dentistry Census, reported during the March 2025 Board of Dentistry meeting, no person had yet registered as a Dental Assistant Level III. We recommend that the functions of the scope of practice of a Dental Assistant Level III be separated for those who may seek authorization only to perform coronal polishing or only to place pit and fissure sealants. This approach aligns with the specific certifications available through the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) for:

- Coronal Polishing (CP);
- Topical Fluoride (TF);
- Sealants (SE).

**Extending the application period and validity of the practice letter from 90 days to 120**

Application processing times, including time periods when applicants may experience difficulty receiving a response from the Board of Dentistry, contribute to the staffing shortage in DC. For that reason, we recommend that both the application period and the practice letter be extended to 120, with an additional allowance for applicants making a good faith effort to successfully complete their application. Applicants should not be penalized for unclear guidance or status updates provided by the DC Health Licensing Portal or a delay in response from the Board of Dentistry regarding their application.

**Removing Redundant Registration Requirements for Level III Dental Assistants**

Successfully registering as a Dental Assistant Level III requires both:

1. Graduation from a CODA accredited educational program for dental assistants; and
2. Current certification from DANB as a Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) in general duties.

In contrast, registration as a Dental Assistant Level II requires that only condition 1 or 2 noted above be satisfied, not both.

In addition, registering as a Dental Assistant Level III also requires:

3. Successfully passing a Board-approved, hands-on course in the functions and duties permitted to be performed by a Level III Dental Assistant; and
4. Current certification as a DANB Certified Preventive Functions Dental Assistant.

We understand that requirements 3 and 4 are in place to ensure competence performing the expanded functions of a Dental Assistant Level III. Requiring both items 1 and 2 is redundant, particularly given the requirement for successful completion of the hands-on course in expanded functions.