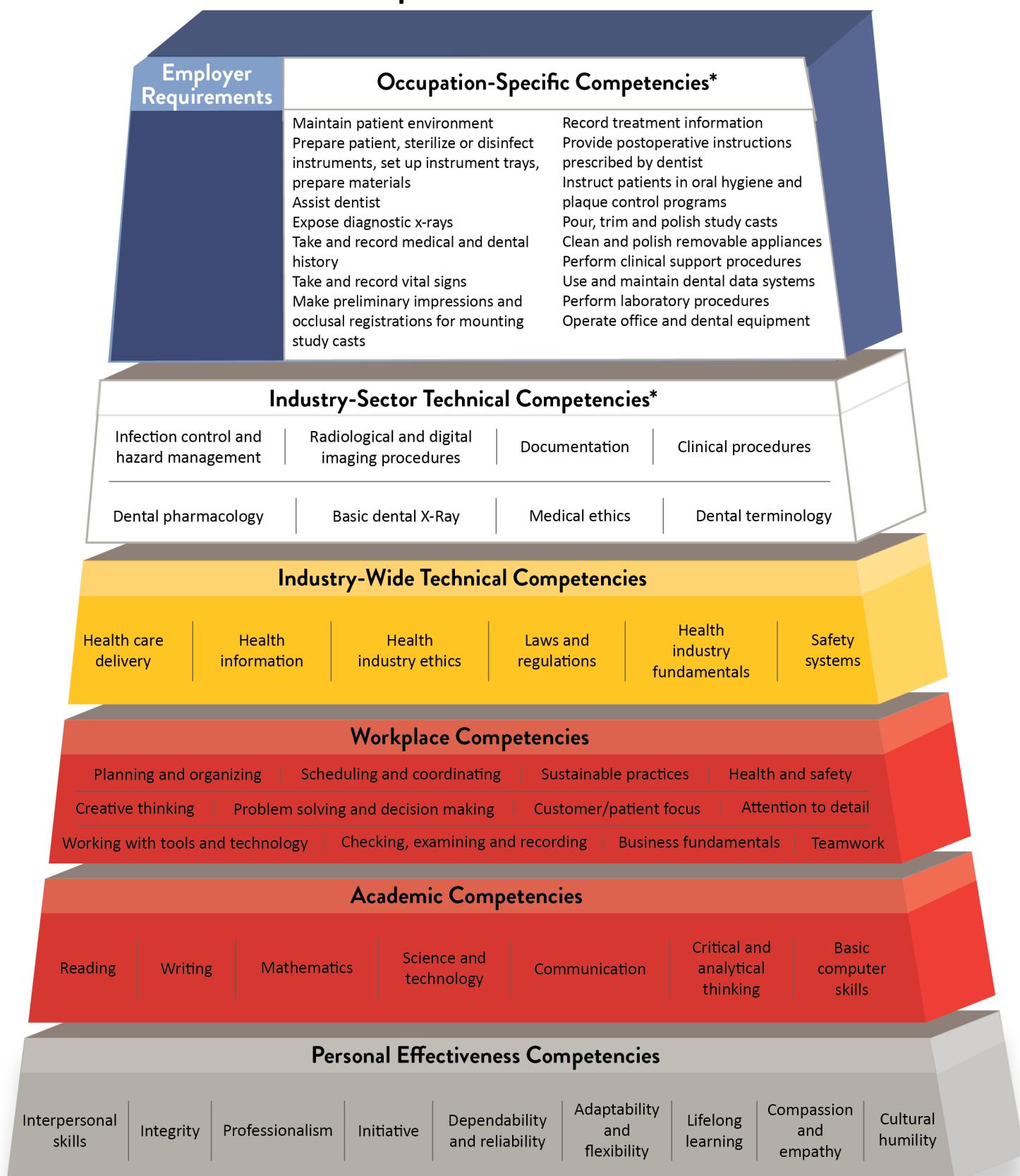


Minnesota Dual-Training Pipeline

Competency Model for Health Care Services

Occupation: Dental Assistant



Based on: Fundamentals of Health Care Competency Model, Employment and Training Administration, United States Department of Labor, February 2025. For more detailed information about competency model creation and sources, visit dli.mn.gov/business/workforce/health-care-services.



Competency Model for Dental Assistant

Dental Assistant – An individual who works with dentists and patients by performing tasks before and after the dentist meets with the patient as well as assisting the dentist during procedures. The dental assistant may maintain patient treatment records, maintain dental operatory equipment and instruments. They provide oral hygiene instruction, perform basic business office procedures including appointment control, receiving payments, and maintaining supply order. They greatly increase the efficiency of the dentist in the delivery of quality oral health care and are valuable members of the dental care team.

*Pipeline recommends the Industry-Sector Technical Competencies as formal training opportunities (provided through related instruction) and the Occupation-Specific Competencies as on-the-job (OJT) training opportunities.

Industry-Sector Technical Competencies

Related Instruction for dual training means the organized and systematic form of education resulting in the enhancement of skills and competencies related to the dual trainee's current or intended occupation.

- **Infection control and hazard management** – Understand and practice infection control to ensure a sanitary dental environment for clients.
- **Radiological and digital imaging procedures** – The act of collecting images that will better detect, diagnose, treat and monitor oral conditions and diseases.
- **Documentation** – Ability to write the diagnosis and treatments that transpired during the dental visit.
- **Clinical procedures** – Understand the core procedures in dentistry, how to accomplish them and the rationale behind them.
- **Dental pharmacology** – Understand how drugs and medications used in dental treatment affect patients.
- **Basic dental x-ray** – The act of collecting images of teeth that the dentist will use to evaluate oral health.

- **Medical ethics** – Understand principles of medical ethics and how they apply in professional standards.
- **Dental terminology** – Knowledge of terms within the dental field.

Occupation-Specific Competencies

On-the-Job Training is hands-on instruction completed at work to learn the core competencies necessary to succeed in an occupation. Common types of OJT include job shadowing, mentorship, cohort-based training, assignment-based project evaluation and discussion-based training.

- **Maintain patient environment** – Practice infection control and hazard management. Prep treatment areas for procedures.
- **Prepare patient, sterilize, or disinfect instruments, set up instrument trays, prepare materials** – Taking preemptive steps to prepare the patient and the tools and materials for dental treatment, including proper cleaning and placement of dental devices.
- **Assist dentist** – Knowledge of dental procedures, as well as scheduling, insurance forms and reports.
- **Expose diagnostic x-rays** – Understand how to process x-ray images for the use of making a diagnosis of dental cavities and other dental issues.
- **Take and record medical and dental history** – Ability to log the patient medications, diagnosis and treatments.
- **Take and record vital signs** – Collect and document accurate temperature, height, weight, pulse, blood pressure vital signs as necessary.
- **Make preliminary impressions and occlusal registrations for mounting study casts** – Understand the act of making three-dimensional images that are critical pieces to successful dental rehabilitation dentistry.
- **Record treatment information** – Documentation of diagnosis and treatments performed.
- **Provide postoperative instructions prescribed by dentist** – Able to offer thorough information to the patient to support them following dental surgery or treatment.
- **Instruct patients in oral hygiene and plaque control programs** – Clearly communicate proper procedures to dental care, which will reinforce the link between oral health and systemic health problems.
- **Pour, trim and polish study casts** – Know how to make a dental model so the dentist can have an exact replica of the patient's teeth, gingiva, and surrounding tissues in the mouth.

- **Clean and polish removable appliances** – Ensure tools and appliances are clean to avoid bacterial exposure.
- **Perform clinical support procedures** – Conduct support procedures that will utilize both personal and technical skills.
- **Use and maintain dental data systems** – Understand various dental software and technology.
- **Perform laboratory procedures** – Knowledge of necessary dental lab tasks.
- **Operate office and dental equipment** – Understand the use of instruments used in dental treatments.

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