Next to you, your staff is the most significant ingredient in the recipe for dental success. Take the time and spend the money to get and keep good employees.

**Employment of Office Staff**
The employment relationship between a dentist and the office staff is governed by federal and state laws on employment, relevant provisions of the state dental practice act and the terms of any employment agreement established between the parties. Information on federal and state employment laws is available through the U.S. Department of Labor and state departments of labor.

**Hiring Practices**
With regard to hiring, the office staff is generally protected by law against discrimination based on sex, age, race, color, disability, religion or national origin. In addition, some state and/or local laws prohibit discrimination based upon sexual orientation. The protections afforded by the various laws cover hiring practices, wage and fringe benefits, work assignments, conditions in the workplace and termination.

Before hiring any employees, contact your state’s Department of Labor and request whatever information is available on wages, hours and working conditions in professional occupations. A good website for general information on this subject administered by the Small Business Administration is [www.business.gov](http://www.business.gov).

Before beginning employment, the dentist and staff members should clearly establish a working arrangement that includes compensation, the obligation of all parties to adhere strictly to all laws governing dental practice and occupational safety and health, benefit programs, periodic performance and compensation plan review and termination. An employee handbook is often used to address these important issues.

**Separation**
There is no general law that prohibits a private employer from discharging an employee. Unless employers have entered into a contract to the contrary, or have verbally indicated that the parties have a contract, employers generally have the right to discharge at will. However, office manuals, written documents and oral agreements may alter the employment at-will relationship. Today, this broad right is limited by a number of federal, state and local laws.

Some states infer a promise of fair dealing as part of the employment relationship. Other states have found that an employee handbook or written offers of “permanent” employment may constitute a contract. Therefore, if termination is necessary, all rights provided by law and established by agreement must be respected by the employer.

Employers should consult with their attorney before terminating an employee or preparing employee handbooks, contracts or other documents that might be construed as a contract of employment.

**Offering Retirement Benefits**
Finally, with regard to retirement, the law does not require an employer to establish retirement or pension plans, nor does it establish benefit levels for such plans. When a private employer elects to set up such a plan, the employer may specify many of the conditions for the plan, subject to federal and state law. However, federal law, ERISA, (the Employee Retirement Income Security Act) regulates who must be included in such plans and provisions of that law must be closely followed.

Pension plans and the rights of employees under the plans are also governed by the general contract law of the state. Pension plans should be prepared with the close assistance of an attorney.

**Professional Liability.** The legal basis for most dental malpractice cases is negligence on the part of the dentist or staff members for whom the dentist is legally responsible. Generally, the law imposes a duty on the part of the dentist or any defendant to conform to a specific standard of conduct to protect the plaintiff from an unreasonable risk of harm. If that duty is breached and the plaintiff is injured as a result, then the defendant may be liable for any damages sustained by the plaintiff.
Under the law, the dentist is required to possess and exercise the knowledge and skill of members of the profession in good standing. In some states, this requirement is judged in the context of the same or similar localities as that in which the dentist practices. In other states, a more general or national standard is accepted by the courts. In addition, the dentist must use any superior judgment, skill and knowledge that he or she actually possesses. Therefore, in some states a dental specialist may be held to a higher standard of care than a general practitioner.

As an employer, a dentist is also responsible for the negligent acts of his or her employees that occur within the scope of the employment relationship. This liability stems from the special relationship between the employee and employer and may be imposed even though the employer-dentist played no direct part in the negligent conduct.

Choosing Employees
As a new solo practitioner, you may decide to hire only one employee to fill the roles of receptionist, secretary and dental assistant. Due to the complexity and demands of being the lone auxiliary, it is essential this person be both compatible and experienced in the duties to be performed. If you’re married, don’t be tempted to ask your spouse to serve as your first employee unless he or she is extremely interested and you discuss it thoroughly. Problems with such an arrangement sometimes outweigh savings in salary or other advantages you anticipate.

Compatibility, education and experience are the three key elements in selecting your office staff. Compatibility is the applicant’s potential to get along well with you, other employees and patients. Close constant contact between dental personnel makes compatibility imperative. And good relationships between your patients and staff members are essential for effective treatment.

In reviewing an applicant’s educational background, look for training in an ADA-accredited program, if appropriate. If you are unfamiliar with the type of training or the institution, check with the local dental society for more information.

The American Dental Association offers many practice management products you may find helpful for your recruiting, hiring, and training efforts, such as Smart Hiring: A Guide for the Dental Office and Employee Office Manual. For additional information, contact ADA Catalog Sales, 1-800-947-4746, or visit the e-catalog Web site, www.adacatalog.org.

Attracting and Interviewing Potential Employees
In some communities, word-of-mouth among professionals is the best way to attract potential employees to your practice. Other dentists in your community may refer suitable people they know who are looking for work.

Or you may advertise in the local paper for auxiliary personnel. A well-written, concise advertisement giving essential details of the position should attract suitable candidates. The Internet may be a source for locating candidates as well, at sites such as ADA.org.

Today, there are numerous general on-line job banks. You may be familiar with some of these Web sites, which include:

- America’s Job Bank, www.ajb.org;
Sample Employment Application

Note: Please consult with your personal attorney for state-specific employment application language. If your dental practice uses a probationary period policy, you can use this language on your employment application.

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

Applications are considered for all positions without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital or veteran status, or disability.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Name: ____________________________________________________________________________________
First Middle Last

Address: __________________________________________________________________________________
Street Address/Apt. number City/State Zip Code

Social Security No.: _________________________Telephone Number: ________________________________

Driver's License Number: _____________________State Issuing Driver's License: ______________________

Have you ever used another name for work or school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please state name(s), dates and circumstances: ______________________________________________

Are you over the age of 18? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If employment is offered, can you submit a birth certificate, Social Security card, certificate of U.S. Citizenship, or other verification of your legal right to work in the U.S.? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you ever been convicted of a felony or criminal offense, including driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, but excluding minor traffic violations and parking tickets? Applicants are not obligated to disclose sealed or expunged records of conviction or arrest. A conviction record will not necessarily bar your from employment. Each application will be individually considered on its merits. ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe: _______________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

REFERRAL SOURCE

How did you learn about (XYZ Dental Office)?_____________________________________________________

EMPLOYMENT DESIRED

Position applied for: _________________________________________________________________________

Date Available: _______________________________Salary Desired: ________________________________

Are you presently employed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you willing to work overtime, if necessary? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you ever applied to our dental office before? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, when? _______________________

Have you ever been employed by (xyz dental office)? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, when? _______________________

59
ADDITIONAL SKILLS
Typing: _______ wpm  Shorthand: _______ wpm
Dictaphone:  □ Yes  □ No  Word Processing:  □ Yes  □ No
Computers:  Hardware: _____________________________________________________________
  Software: _____________________________________________________________

EDUCATION

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<th>Name &amp; Location of School</th>
<th>Dates Attended</th>
<th>Did You Graduate?</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Grade Point Average</th>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Licensing/Certifications: __________________________ City/State: __________________________

Employment History
List the most recent position first. Although some of the information requested below may be on your resume, please complete all of the employment history requested. Include your resume as well.

Name of company: ____________________________________________________________
Type of Business: ____________________________________________________________
City/State: __________________________ Company Telephone Number: __________________________
Date of employment:  From ______ To ______ Salaries: From ______ To ______
Exact title or position: __________________________________________________________
Immediate Supervisor: ___________________ Supervisor’s position: ___________________  
May we contact? ________________________________
Reason for leaving: ____________________________________________________________
Description of duties, responsibilities and accomplishments: ____________________________
Name of company: __________________________________________________________________________
Type of Business: __________________________________________________________________________
City/State: _________________________________ Company Telephone Number: ________________________
Date of employment: From ____________ To ____________ Salary: From ___________ To _____________
Exact title or position ________________________________________________________________________
Immediate Supervisor: _______________________ Supervisor’s position: ______________________________
May we contact? ___________________________________________________________________________
Reason for leaving: __________________________________________________________________________

Description of duties, responsibilities and accomplishments: _________________________________________

Name of company: __________________________________________________________________________
Type of Business: __________________________________________________________________________
City/State: _________________________________ Company Telephone Number: ________________________
Date of employment: From ____________ To ____________ Salary: From ___________ To _____________
Exact title or position ________________________________________________________________________
Immediate Supervisor: _______________________ Supervisor’s position: ______________________________
May we contact? ___________________________________________________________________________
Reason for leaving: __________________________________________________________________________

Description of duties, responsibilities and accomplishments: _________________________________________

Name of company: __________________________________________________________________________
Type of Business: __________________________________________________________________________
City/State: _________________________________ Company Telephone Number: ________________________
Date of employment: From ____________ To ____________ Salary: From ___________ To _____________
Exact title or position ________________________________________________________________________
Immediate Supervisor: _______________________ Supervisor’s position: ______________________________
May we contact? ___________________________________________________________________________
Reason for leaving: __________________________________________________________________________

Description of duties, responsibilities and accomplishments: _________________________________________

Please explain what you were doing during any periods of unemployment between the above jobs: ______
_________________________________________________________________________________________

Have you ever been terminated from employment or asked to resign by any employer?  □ Yes  □ No
If yes, please explain: ______________________________________________________________________
Please read carefully before signing

(XYZ Dental Office) is an equal opportunity employer. I understand that no question being asked as part of my consideration for employment is intended to be unlawful.

I certify that the information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge and understand that falsification of this information is grounds for refusal to hire or, if hired, dismissal.

I authorize any of the persons or organizations referenced in this application to give you any and all information concerning my previous employment, education, or any other information they might have, personal or otherwise, with regard to any of the subjects covered by this application and release all such parties from all liability for any damage that may result from furnishing such information to you. I authorize you to request and receive such information.

In consideration for my employment and my being considered for employment by your company, I agree to conform to the rules and regulations of the company and acknowledge that these rules and regulations may be changed, interpreted, withdrawn, or added to by your company at any time, at the company’s sole option and without prior notice to me. I further acknowledge that my employment may be terminated, and any offer of employment, if such is made, may be withdrawn, with or without prior notice, at any time, at the option of the company or myself.

I understand that no representative of the company has any authority to enter into any agreement for employment for any specified period of time, or assure or make some other personnel move, either prior to commencement of employment or after I have become employed, or to assure any benefits or terms and conditions of employment, or make any agreement contrary to the foregoing.

I acknowledge that I have advised that this application will remain active for no more than 90 days from the date it was made.

Date: ______________________ Signature: ________________________________________________
The Internet now makes it easy to narrow your search for your dental team. Specialty e-recruiting sites target a smaller, more qualified audience. These sites can also provide various services, such as resume databases or unique software tracking that allows employer and applicant to communicate with each other through the hiring process. Dentists can also place advertising banners, channel buttons, and splash pages on these e-recruiting Web sites.

Listed below is just a sampling of specialty job sites of organizations that are geared toward the dental profession.

- www.dentalassistantsjobs.com
- www.dentalhygienistjobs.com
- www.dentaljobs.net
- www.dentallaboratoryjobs.com
- www.dentallink.net
- www.dentalpracticejobs.com
- www.dentistjobs.com
- www.dentalworkers.com

Newspaper want ads remain a valuable resource for job seekers. The Internet allows access to many of these newspapers (large metros, local, campus, alternative, etc.) as well as other news sources around the world. There are many Web sites that can link you to numerous newspapers. One such example is http://newslink.org.

Employers can post want ads on the Web sites of various dental associations, societies, universities, and dental schools. Obviously, if you have a dental practice Web site, you could use it to post your own job openings.

Be sure your help wanted ads do not discriminate.

Use your office phone number in an advertisement if you need an employee immediately and list a specific time frame for these calls. For example, you might state that they should call between 1:00 and 3:00 pm.

Screening resumes by mail or through the use of a blind box number will eliminate telephone calls that might interrupt your routine throughout the day. However, some people-oriented applicants may not be comfortable sending resumes if they don’t know who will be receiving them.

After a week to ten days, review all the applications or resumés you have received. Eliminate those that do not meet your stated qualifications (not available full time; no experience) and sort the rest into “A” and “B” lists. Call each qualified candidate to review employment history, availability and other basics. Note the applicant’s voice and manner. Does he or she project professionalism? Based on the phone interviews, schedule appointments for applicants. You may want to use your day off for interviews.

Have each candidate complete an employment application. These can be purchased from most dental supply houses, office stationery stores, or you may want to develop your own form, based on the following sample.

**During the interview**

When interviewing experienced applicants, you may want to elicit the following information from your discussion:

1. Why did they leave their previous jobs? Note any criticism of former employers. These comments can be revealing and may indicate future problem areas.

2. Is the person’s experience applicable to your practice needs? This is especially important if yours is a specialty practice.

3. Does the applicant seem flexible? Responsibilities may change as the staff grows. Each employee may have specific assignments but will also need to remain flexible to perform other duties as needed. An experienced assistant will recognize hours
and responsibilities may vary due to emergencies.

4. How is the applicant’s appearance? An applicant should have a well-groomed appearance.

5. Does the applicant have transportation to and from the office? If public transportation is not easily accessible, punctuality may be a problem.

During the interview, try to avoid questions that can be answered simply “yes” or “no.” Let the applicant do the majority of speaking, in order to find those candidates who are intelligent and alert.

Take special note of people who ask you questions about your practice. This can indicate a real interest on their part. Discuss office policies briefly and ask the applicant’s expectations for starting and regular salaries; expectations should roughly equal the pay offered. At the end of the interview, let the applicant know that you will be in touch regarding your decision but do not commit yourself to hiring anyone.

Write down your impressions immediately after the interview so they won’t be forgotten, or use the form at the end of the chapter to help you collect your impressions of the candidates. If you have asked the applicants to provide references, call those previous employers or character references at this point. Always ask for references and always call the references. Be sure to get written permission to call the references.

Examples of some of the more typical background resources include the applicant, former employers, educational institutions, governmental sources, consumer credit agencies, Internet databases, and personal references. Many employers choose to use professional background check companies because of their expertise and convenience.

As you might expect, doing a thorough background check takes time; a project you may want to outsource.

A dentist who hires a third party to perform background checks on prospective employees should also be mindful of the Fair Credit Reporting Act. A dentist who hires a third party to perform background checks on prospective employees should also be mindful of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (“FCRA”). The FCRA imposes various requirements on employers who rely on “consumer reporting agencies” to conduct background investigations in connection with prospective employees. The term “consumer-reporting agency” is defined quite broadly, such that any dentist who hires a third party (e.g., private detective, employment screening company, on-line data broker, etc.) to investigate an applicant’s background will be subject to the terms of the statute. First, the dentist must provide the prospective employee with a notice that the dentist is seeking a background report concerning the individual. This notice must be in writing, clear and conspicuous, and in a document that solely consists of the disclosure. Second, the dentist must obtain the written authorization of the individual prior to seeking the background check. This authorization may be included in the employment application itself. (The dentist may also want to include a stipulation that states that the furnishing of any false information in the application is grounds for denial of employment.) If the applicant refuses to consent to a reasonable request for information, some jurisdictions may allow the dentist legally to decide not to hire the person on that ground.

Thus, dentists should give serious thought to performing background checks on their prospective employees. While the scope and detail of the

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**Sample Letter to an Unsuccessful Applicant**

_Date_

_Name_

_Address_

_Dear (Name):_

_Thank you for taking the time to meet with us during your recent visit to (Dental Office). We enjoyed meeting with you and hope that your visit proved to be informative and interesting._

_Unfortunately, due to our staffing requirements, we may employ only a limited number of the many candidates interested in positions with our dental team. Therefore, I regret to inform you that we are unable to offer you a position at this time._

_Please accept our best wishes for your future success, and thank you again for your interest in (Dental Office)._ 

_Sincerely,_
background check may vary depending on the position available, background checks may help dentists minimize or avoid liability for claims of negligent hiring. Background checks may similarly curb instances of theft and workplace violence. However, because federal and state law governs the procedures and scope of background checks, a dentist should consult with an attorney familiar with federal and state law in this area before undertaking this process.

After interviewing is completed, list applicants according to degree of qualification. Call the first applicant on the list, offer the job and indicate what the compensation will be. If the person does not accept, call the second person on the list, repeating until the position is filled. *Never let anyone know that they were not the first person on the list.* Write to the candidates whom you did not select to let them know of your decision and to thank them for their interest. In addition, tell them you will keep their name on file for future reference.

**Training Period**

When your new employee begins, explain office policies in detail, answer questions, discuss compensation and benefits, and review office hours and length of training period.

The new employee’s training period should be long enough to allow you an opportunity for a complete evaluation and short enough so that the employee is not discouraged. During the training period you may decide to pay a salary/or hourly amount slightly lower than you would pay a full time employee. An applicant’s motivation to perform well during the training period may be enhanced by the awareness of a possible compensation increase.

At the end of the training period discuss performance strengths and weaknesses candidly with the employee. If your employee handbook provides for a disciplinary process, that process should be followed if you are addressing performance problems.

If the new employee proves to be acceptable during the training period, increase the person’s salary (if you have structured the training period as a lower salary time) and explain your employment review procedure, which should be done at least annually.

The American Dental Association offers many practice management products you may find helpful for your training efforts, such as *Fast-Track Training: The Basics for New Dental Staff,* *Basic Training II: for New Clinical Personnel,* *Basic Training III: for Dental Administrative Personnel* and *CEO Crash Course: A Dentist’s Guide to Practice Leadership.* For additional information, contact ADA Catalog Sales, 1-800-947-4746, or visit the e-catalog Web site, www.adacatalog.org.

**Annual review**

The annual review allows employer and employee a frank discussion about performance, salary and any other situation that requires comment. Some consultants and experienced practitioners schedule compensation reviews 30 days after performance reviews to allow for corrections or expansion of duties where appropriate.

**Employee performance**

When an employee’s performance is inadequate, have a review meeting with the person as soon as possible. Describe your view of the situation and ask for an explanation. If probation is warranted, the procedure set forth in your employee handbook should be followed. Terminations should be made in accordance with state and federal employment laws and in consultation with your personal attorney.

**Salary and Compensation Policies**

Salary and compensation levels depend on the local economy. You are competing for employee talent with all other employers in your area. However, quality is more important than cost. To secure good talent, you must be willing to pay good wages.

**How to identify possible wage levels**

1. Check “help wanted” ads in the classified section to determine what other practices are offering.
New Hire Checklist

Employee Name __________________________________ Date of Hire ________________________________

Social Security Number_____________________________ Home Telephone Number _____________________

To Do

☑ Complete employee documents such as state and federal forms (i.e., W-4 and I-9). Make sure these documents are signed and dated.

☑ Make sure social security number is on file.

☑ Comply with INS (Immigration and Naturalization Services) regulations.

☑ Obtain copies of and verification of licenses, if applicable.

☑ Some states require training in dental radiography procedures for certain staff members. Contact your state dental society for more information.

☑ Make sure employment application (signed and dated) and resume are on file.

☑ Verifications of immunizations, such as hepatitis vaccine, if applicable.

☑ Obtain the name and phone number of an individual to contact in the event of an emergency.

☑ Decide whether an office key should be given to your employee. Document all of the items that you give to an employee when you hire them. Ask each new employee to review and sign the list, and make sure the employee understands that he/she must return the items and equipment when employment ends.

☑ Order name badge, if applicable.

☑ Engage in office tour and introduce employee to coworkers. (Review parking area, time cards, storage for personal belongings, employee lounge, etc.)

☑ Set training (clinical, office software systems, etc.) schedule.

☑ Explain office security policies. Go over alarm system and instructions on opening and closing the office.

☑ Set date for 90-day performance appraisal.

Office Policies and Procedures to Review

☑ Philosophy and mission statement of your dental practice. Discuss the standards of performance that are required in your dental practice.

☑ Review and document patient confidentiality policies, along with HIPAA privacy policies if applicable. (If your practice is required to comply with HIPAA, review HIPAA Security policies by compliance date of April 21, 2005.)

☑ Discuss medical and dental benefits, if applicable.

☑ Discuss insurance and pension plans, if applicable.

☑ Provide the employee with your employee office manual. Ask employee to read the employee office manual and sign a form indicating that he or she has read, and understands the contents of the manual.

☑ Review infection control procedures and bloodborne diseases policy, as well as personal protective attire.

☑ Discuss anti-harassment policies and provide your new employee with a copy of the policy if it is not included in the employee office manual.
Discuss pay rates, overtime, pay days, and incentive plans.
Discuss your communications policy, such as personal use of telephone, cell phone usage, e-mail, etc.
Distribute a copy of your dental office organizational chart and job descriptions of your dental practice, if one exists.
Provide your new employee with a copy of the job description and retain a signed copy acknowledging receipt of the job description in the employee's personnel file.
Discuss performance evaluation process and schedule.
Discuss work schedule.
Discuss attendance policy, and who to contact in cases of absences and tardiness.
Discuss dress, appearance, and uniform policies.
Review patient contact procedures.

Miscellaneous
Offer map of neighborhood showing restaurants, shopping centers, and other attractions.
Discuss all other office policies, procedures, or patient services you'd like to highlight.
Set aside time to meet with new employee to thoroughly answer questions he or she may have.

2. Ask your dental supply dealer. They can be a good informal source of information.
3. Check articles and surveys that are published in various journals.
4. Check with the dental staff of an educational institution in your area.

Review the U.S. Department of Labor regulations (www.dol.gov) to make sure you are properly classifying your employees (exempt or non-exempt). The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, record-keeping and child labor standards affecting full-time and part-time workers in the private sector. The FLSA exempts from its coverage “any employee employed in a bona fide executive, administrative, or professional capacity.” However, the exemptions are generally narrowly defined under FLSA and an employer should carefully check out the exact terms and conditions for each. Specific information is available from local wage-hour offices. Please note that employers cannot simply designate an employee as salary or hourly wage according to personal preference. The nature of the job dictates whether an employee should be paid on a salary or on an hourly basis.

Compensation Policies
While the amount of compensation you offer may depend on local or regional economic factors, other aspects of your compensation policy will be your own personal choice. The following sample office policies delineate the many details and components of compensation.

One last note. Consider using a payroll service or a computerized accounting program. This can help you run the office more efficiently, while keeping you in control of the payroll process. Contact SurePayroll @ 866-535-93592 or log on @ www.surepayroll.com/welcome/ada/default.asp for more information.
Compensation
Each new employee hired receives starting compensation, which is determined on an individual basis. Consideration is given to the following:
  a. educational background
  b. past employment experience
  c. training and experience in dentistry
  d. unique talents, abilities or training that would be useful in the new position

After a three-month training period, each employee will have an evaluation and be considered for an increase in compensation. The amount of the raise will be determined on an individual basis, based on:
  1. Interest in office and duties
  2. Efficiency
  3. Personal appearance
  4. Promptness
  5. Dependability
  6. Individual value to the office

Periodic compensation reviews will be scheduled. Raises are given only if they are earned and will depend on business considerations, the economy and performance. If the employee has not earned and is not entitled to an increase in compensation, a frank discussion between the employee and employer will review performance problem areas.

Pay day
Paychecks will be prepared on the 15th and the last working day of each month.

Bonuses
Bonuses may be paid for services or success over and above the usual or expected.

Sick pay
After the initial three months training period, five days sick leave with pay will be allowed for each twelve-month period. The sick leave plan does not carry over from one calendar year to another.

Any unused sick days will be paid at the close of the year as a form of wellness bonus. Upon termination from employment, unused sick days will be paid to the employee.

Hours
Office hours are from 8:30 am. to 5:00 p.m., with one hour for lunch. All employees are expected to be at the office 30 minutes prior to the time the first patient is to be seen. Tardiness will not be tolerated.

When an assistant finishes his or her duties for the day, he or she will be expected to assist the receptionist or other assistants until everyone’s work is finished. There are no scheduled coffee breaks during the day. Five work days are considered one work week. Working hours may be changed to accommodate the needs of the patients or the doctor. Advance notice will be given whenever possible.

Work week
The regular work week consists of the following days: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday (9-1), Thursday, Friday and Saturday (9-1). This schedule may be changed at any time by the doctor.

Vacation
Employees will schedule their vacations after consulting with the doctor, preferably while the doctor is on vacation or when the doctor will be out of the office for an extended period of time. Each employee who has been employed at least twelve (12) months shall be eligible for one week’s vacation with pay. Employees who have been employed for more than twelve (12) months will receive two weeks vacation with pay. Vacation time and/or pay is not cumulative and must be taken in the current calendar year in which it is earned.

Employment Status
(Practice name) is an at-will employer and either the (practice name) or the employer may terminate the employment relationship at any time with or without notice or cause. Any disciplinary procedures are subordinate to the (Practice Name)’s at-will employment status.
Holidays
The office will recognize the following holidays during the year: (If the holiday should fall on the employee's day off, then the employee will be entitled to equal time off at another date.)
January 1 New Year's Day
July 4 Independence Day
September (1st Monday) Labor Day
November Thanksgiving Day
December 24 Christmas Eve Day
December 25 Christmas Day
December 26 Day after Christmas
(Doctor may wish to substitute Jewish holidays as appropriate.)

Dental care
Full-time employees will receive free dental care after six months of employment, excluding lab fees and other related costs. Members of their immediate families will be treated at 80% of the normal fee. (Immediate family includes spouse and children.)

Uniforms
The practice will purchase three (3) complete uniforms for each new employee, excluding shoes. The employee will be responsible for the furnishing of the rest of his or her uniforms and the laundering and care of them. Only uniforms approved by the doctor will be used in the office.

Note:
Except for professional meetings, vacation time and holidays, all employees, are expected to report for work on days when the doctor is out. During this time cabinets can be cleaned, equipment serviced, records brought up to date, shelves cleaned, supplies straightened, x-ray tanks cleaned, x-rays processed and mounted, charts filed, operatories and reception room cleaned, and all accessible areas dusted and cleaned. Should an employee take this time off, it will be without pay.

Note:
This handbook of personnel policies is prepared as a guide and reference for employees of this dental office and is not a contract for employment. It expresses current policies of this office and will be updated as new policies or procedures develop.

Increasing Your Staff
Your first employee is likely to be someone who is versatile who can handle all allied dental personnel duties. As your practice expands, you may add other employees to help you increase your productivity. For efficient use of your allied dental personnel you should delegate responsibilities—for example, while one employee maintains your business affairs, the other covers by performing chairside duties.

You should want to employ additional allied dental personnel if your workforce is overloaded. Remember: in these instances the increase in production generated by the new staff member will likely be much higher than the additional person’s salary and other expenses of employment.

Hiring a Dental Hygienist
At some time in the development of your practice, perhaps within 6-12 months, you may want to add a dental hygienist to your team even if it is for only one to two days per week. Pursuant to the overtime rules, dental hygienists are exempted from the overtime provisions only if they have successfully completed four years of pre-professional and professional study in an accredited college or university approved by the Commission on Accreditation of Dental and Dental Auxiliary Educational Programs of the American Dental Association. The timing of this addition is dependent upon many factors—some personal, some professional and all highly individualized.

One of the factors to be considered is your patient load. Tally the number of prophylaxes you do in an average week. If you spend one day a week (or 8 hours, total) on cleanings, as is more commonly the case with a new practice, you may need to hire a hygienist to see patients one day per week. You can then increase your employed hygienist time in proportion to the patient demand.
Adding a hygienist to your practice will free you to concentrate on other dental treatment, while the hygienist performs routine prophylaxes and dental health education. Other advantages of hiring a hygienist include reducing the time a patient must wait for an appointment for treatment and the addition of further positive influences on your patients, setting the stage for case acceptance. The dentist’s enhanced ability to see patients on time and to see a greater number of patients each week adds a great deal to the productivity of the practice.

Job Descriptions and Procedure Manual
Written job descriptions and a procedure manual will help your employees understand and perform their duties. The job description should include a short statement about position and a list of duties. Sometimes duties are organized in daily, weekly, and monthly categories. Good resources to use for these subjects include *Employee Office Manual: A Guide for the Dental Practice* and *Smart Hiring: A Guide for the Dental Office*. For additional information, contact ADA Catalog Sales, 1-800-947-4746, or visit the e-catalog Web site, www.adacatalog.org.

Clarify duties
When more than one employee works for you, make sure they understand their individual responsibilities, but emphasize that each must be flexible to perform other duties as needed, as allowable by state law.

One duty for which all auxiliaries should assume responsibility is answering the telephone. Some believe that a dentist should never answer the office phone; your staff should screen all calls. Although your receptionist is generally responsible for this, other employees should be prepared to take over when necessary. Provide a list of people, such as your spouse and other family members, to whom you will speak whenever there is an emergency. Otherwise, direct your staff to take messages so you may return calls.

Staff Meetings
Some consultants recommend a regular staff meeting lasting one to one and a half hours every two weeks.

Staff meetings are an accepted way to discuss problems or other situations related to the practice, as well as to educate your employees. It is also a time to monitor the office efficiency during the previous month and to discuss ways to improve patient care.

Develop an agenda to conduct a meeting in an orderly and efficient manner. A list posted out of public view, perhaps in the lab, should be provided to allow the staff, including the dentist, to contribute subjects for the agenda and to be explored at the meeting. The staff meeting allows you to evaluate your employees’ opinions before making changes in office procedures.

Website Resources:
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). This organization has a wealth of information on workplace hazards.
- **GovDocs.com**, [www.govdocs.com](http://www.govdocs.com). This resource offers federal and state labor laws posters.
- **National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety**, [www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh). This resource offers information on just about any...
occupational topic that employees face in today’s workplace.

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), www.osha.gov. This resource features OSHA regulations and compliance resources.

- Social Security Administration, www.ssa.gov. This resource features on-line services and benefit information of the Social Security Administration.


- U.S. Department of Labor, www.dol.gov. This resource features information on labor laws, regulations, statistics, and other subjects.

Sample Dental Assistant Job Description

Note: Content and expanded functions may vary in accordance with state dental practice acts.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES
Responsible for assisting the dentist in the clinical treatment of patients.

SPECIFIC DUTIES

Patient Management
- Greet patients when they sign in and monitor arrival time
- Escort patients to treatment room
- Seat patients and have proper set up for procedures
- Show care and concern, and help patients feel comfortable
- Obtain and review health histories according to office protocol
- Try not to leave your patient unattended in the chair
- Anticipate and assist dentist’s needs at all times
- Perform expanded functions and other tasks as assigned by the dentist
- Mix dental materials
- Ensure all patients questions are answered thoroughly before they leave
- Chart all patients and record date, service rendered, and any charges
- Escort patients from the treatment room
- Ensure proper treatment notes are recorded in patient’s chart
- Perform clinical procedures as practice act allows and as directed by dentist
- Give patient instruction and demonstrate, when necessary
- Monitor patient flow
- Notify Treatment Coordinator if a patient should be called in the evening after a difficult appointment

Treatment Room Management and Sterilization
- Check to ensure that dental units are ready, stocked, and clean at all times
- Oversee cleanliness of the treatment room according to sterilization procedures
- Disinfect treatment rooms according to OSHA regulations
- Sterilize all instruments and handpieces according to OSHA regulations
- Organize trays, instruments, and treatment room drawers at all times
- Ensure that office sterilizations procedures document is on display
- Send out promptly and monitor all dental laboratory cases
- Implement a preventative maintenance/cleaning schedule for dental equipment
- Maintain dental office emergency kits and nitrous and oxygen tanks
- Follow laboratory procedures according to office protocol
Records Management
- See that records are stored securely and handled in compliance with legal requirements, including the HIPAA privacy and security regulations if applicable
- Accurately file patient information
- Arrange patient charts and radiographs for next day's appointments
- Track cases and referral to and from other doctors
- Assist in the administration of the recall system

Inventory Management
- Monitor inventory and order dental office supplies as needed
- Ensure that treatment rooms are stocked at all times

Office Participation
- Help in other areas of the office when necessary (i.e., phones, unpacking supplies, completing insurance forms, moving dismissed patient records, etc.)
- Be an active participant in staff meetings
- Promote team concept by interacting with others in the office

PERSONNEL REQUIREMENTS

Education/Experience
- High school diploma
- Graduate of ADA-accredited dental assisting program or dental assisting experience preferred
- Coursework in dental instruments and procedures
- Compliance with state dental practice requirements (i.e., X-ray requirements, OSHA training)
- Legible handwriting for notations in patient chart; computer skills desired [list programs]
- Commitment to CE for career development

Interpersonal
- Good interpersonal skills to maintain effective rapport with patients, dentists, other staff members, and community
- Effective verbal skills to communicate with patients and staff

Sample Receptionist/Administrative Assistant Description

Reports to:

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES
Responsible for maintaining appearance and order of dental office, patient scheduling, and patient management.

SPECIFIC DUTIES
Reception Management
- Open and close dental office according to office protocol
- Check the daily schedule for accuracy and post it in all treatment rooms
- Answer and respond to telephone calls with professionalism
- Review supplies for reception and provide order to business manager
- Maintain petty cash
- Ensure that HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices Notice is on display, if applicable

Patient Management
- Maintain a professional reception area/office; organize patient education materials, keep the facility neat, etc.
- Greet and welcome patients and visitors to the practice
- Check in patients according to office protocol, verifying and updating health information
- Manage recall and inactive patient system
- Confirm the next day's appointments by telephone
- Schedule patients for efficient use of doctor and staff time
- Check patient back up list to try to fill in cancellation and no-show appointment times
- Collect payment from patients at time of treatment
- Make follow-up appointments as needed
- Assist in the treatment room as needed
Records Management
- Gather and accurately record dental, medical, and insurance information from patients
- See that records are stored securely and handled in compliance with legal requirements, including the HIPAA privacy and security regulations, if applicable
- Accurately file patient information
- Arrange patient charts and radiographs for the next day's appointments
- Track cases and referrals to and from other doctors

Insurance
- Update insurance information on all patients at all times
- Submit treatment plans for predetermination of benefits
- Prepare claim forms for patients with dental insurance
- Organize supporting materials for claim forms, such as radiographs or written narratives
- Mail claim forms from office
- Assist in the resolution of problems with third-party payers

Billing
- Prepare billing statements promptly and accurately
- Mail billing statements as directed by the dentist
- Prepare and mail overdue account letters as directed by the dentist
- Telephone patients with accounts overdue
- Post checks received each day

Correspondence
- Sort, organize, and distribute mail
- Prepare and send out new patient and referral thank-you letters
- Prepare and send out continuing care notices on the 15th of each month
- Prepare and send out correspondence as directed by the doctor

Inventory Management
- Monitor inventory and order dental office supplies as needed
- Monitor and make sure all dental office equipment is working properly

Office Participation
- Be an active participant in staff meetings
- Perform other tasks as assigned by the dentist

PERSONNEL REQUIREMENTS
Education/Experience
- High school diploma
- 2 years’ office experience preferred
- Legible handwriting for notations in schedule

Interpersonal
- Good interpersonal skills to maintain effective rapport with patients, dentists, other staff members, and community
- Effective verbal skills to communicate with patients and staff