

Dental Assistants are a skilled member of the dental health care team as they assist with patient care, office, and laboratory duties. You may also prepare patients for treatment, take x-rays and assist the dentist in performing dental procedures. Employment opportunities are available in general dentistry or in a specialized area such as orthodontics, oral surgery, pediatric dentistry, periodontics and endodontics.

What type of career can I have with this major?

Since this major is so comprehensive, you will have a variety of excellent employment opportunities.

- Business Administration Assistant
- Clinical Laboratory Technician
- Dental Assistant
 - Registered Dental Assistant (RDA) - state
 - Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) – national
- Dental Equipment Sales Representative
- Dental Insurance Claim Adjuster
- Dental Laboratory Technician
- Dental Product Sales Representative
- Dental Writer
- Dental X-Ray Technician
- Office Manager
- Receptionist

Where can I work?

This profession provides you with a choice of various work environments including government agencies, non-profit organizations, for-profit agencies, and public and private companies.

- Armed Forces
- Colleges and Universities
- Dental Equipment and Supply Companies
- Dental Schools
- Group Dental Clinics
- Hospital Dental Clinics
- Insurance Companies
- Military Dental Clinics
- Mobile Dental Clinics
- Peace Corps
- Private Dental Practices
- Public Health Dentistry
- Religious Organizations
- Solo Dental Clinics
- Specialty Dental Practices

What type of professional organizations and resources are available in this industry?

There are many professional organizations that offer resources, articles, job opportunities, training and conference information. We suggest you visit each organization's website to gather more information and contacts in your field.

- Academy of Dentistry International
- Academy of General Dentistry
- Alliance of the American Dental Association
- American Association for Dental Research
- American Association of Hospital Dentists
- American Association of Public Health Dentistry
- American Dental Assistants Association
- California Dental Assistant Association
- Commission on Dental Accreditation, American Dental Association
- Dental Assisting National Board
- National Dental Association
- San Diego County Dental Assistants Society
- Special Care Dentistry Association/American Dental Education Association

What type of Dental Assisting program does San Diego Mesa College offer?

The program at San Diego Mesa College focuses on preventive dental care, anatomy and physiology, dental materials, dental practice management, chairside dental assisting, and radiography. Students will also have the opportunity for directed clinical practice working in private dental offices or clinics under the supervision of the clinic and college staff.

- Certificate of Achievement: Dental Assisting (RDA, CDA)
- Associate in Science: Dental Assisting (RDA, CDA)

See college catalog for program descriptions, course titles, and areas of emphasis.

Associates Degrees/Certificates**Getting Started**

- Step 1: [Application](#) - Start by completing the online application for admission
- Step 2: [Program Specific Application](#) – Complete the program specific Dental Assistant program application
- Step 3: [Orientation](#) - Complete the online New Student Orientation (Flash player required)
- Step 4: [Assessment](#) - Visit the Assessment office to learn about English and math testing
- Step 5: [Advisement](#) - Complete the online First Semester Planning Workshop
- Step 6: [Registration](#) - Register for classes

While You're Taking Classes

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|---|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Update your resume and craft a cover letter | Attend job fairs | Conduct industry research |
| Look into a dental assistant job/internship opportunities | Perform job searches | Think about transfer options |

Pathway to becoming a Registered Dental Assistant

1. Obtain your Certificate of Achievement or Associates through San Diego Mesa College OR complete 15 months of working in a dental office as a dental assistant
2. Complete the following courses in radiation safety, coronal polishing, California Dental Practice Act and infection control, Basic Life Support course either through the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross
3. Complete and pass the California written and practical test
4. Complete and pass the California written test in law and ethics
5. Apply as a Registered Dental Assistant with the Dental Board of California

Information above adapted from <http://dental-assistant-salary.net/how-to-become-a-dental-assistant-in-california/>