

## **DANB Publishes Career Ladder Templates for Dental Assistants**

Dental assistants tell DANB that they are more likely to make a long-term commitment to the profession if they have opportunities for career growth. They believe that they should be able to perform more complex duties as they gain experience, education, and credentials. However, the tasks that dental assistants are allowed to perform currently vary widely from state to state, a situation that creates professional obstacles. A dental assistant who performs a specific function in one state, often after successfully completing a number of education and/or training requirements, may be forbidden to perform the identical function should he or she relocate.

In the spring of 2006, DANB will publish *DANB's State-by-State Career Ladder Templates for Dental Assistants*. Containing individual listings of dental and orthodontic assisting qualifications for each of the 50 states, this volume will provide information on what tasks, if any, a dental assistant can perform without any education, training, or exams; the required level of supervision; and the precise entry-level job title in that state. Each template then defines the requirements (such as coursework or exams) that an assistant would need to complete in order to move up the career ladder.

This resource will prove invaluable to assistants who plan to relocate, who are interested in continuing their educations, or who seek to develop their professional responsibilities and skills. It will also aid State Dental Board members and officials who are interested in comparing their state's requirements to others.

DANB's Career Ladder project is part of a larger initiative to support the development of a *national* career ladder model for dental assistants, based on one set of core tasks, levels, and requirements. Understanding that state practice act provisions are the purview of each state, if dental assistants who are qualified to perform certain duties in one state are recognized as competent in other states, recruitment, employment, and job satisfaction of qualified assistants will improve. This will also allow dentists to focus on dentistry while assistants perform delegated duties, thus increasing access to care.

*DANB's State-by-State Career Ladder Templates for Dental Assistants* draws upon research conducted as part of the American Dental Assistants Association (ADAA) / DANB Alliance Core Competency Study. The Alliance developed a survey that listed 70 dental assisting tasks. Respondents were asked to rate each task in terms of the training, education, and/or experience they believe *should be* (not what currently is) required to perform the task. From March 2002 until June 2005, the Alliance received and evaluated responses from DANB Certified Dental Assistants (CDAs), non-CDAs, Program Directors from accredited dental assisting programs, and dentists. The results reveal that professional practitioners consider certain tasks to merit more education and training than others—a standard that is currently not met nationwide.

*DANB's State-by-State Career Ladder Templates* will reflect “what is;” the results of the Core Competency Survey describe “what could or should be.” The Alliance has taken the first step towards this goal by identifying the benefits of national competency requirements, launching the survey, and alerting dental communities to the project. Now,

researchers, lawmakers, professionals, and many other individuals will need to join forces in order to carry this initiative to completion. DANB looks forward to continued success as it works to enhance the professional growth of dental assistants throughout the country.

*Article provided by the Dental Assisting National Board, Inc.*