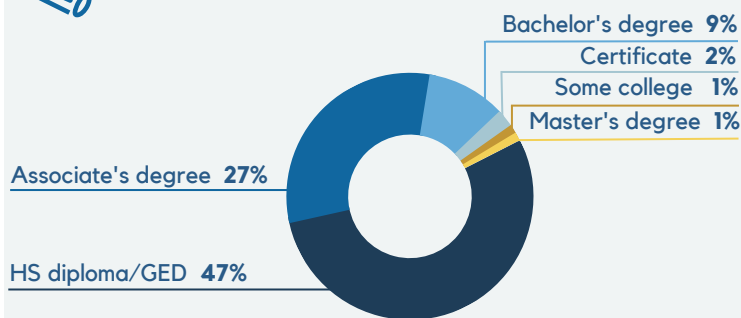


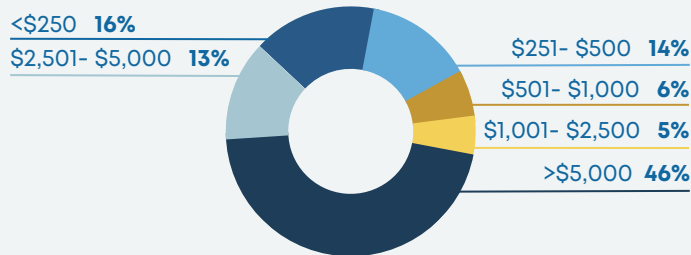
2022 PA DENTAL ASSISTANT SURVEY*



HIGHEST DEGREE ATTAINED



COST SPENT ON TRAINING



EXAM PREPAREDNESS

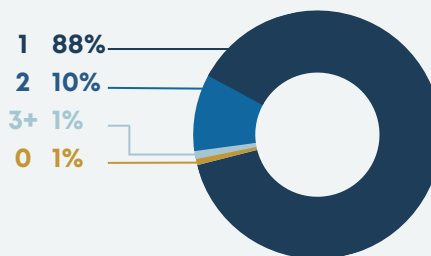


8 out of 10 respondents felt adequately prepared to take the DANB radiology exam for the first time

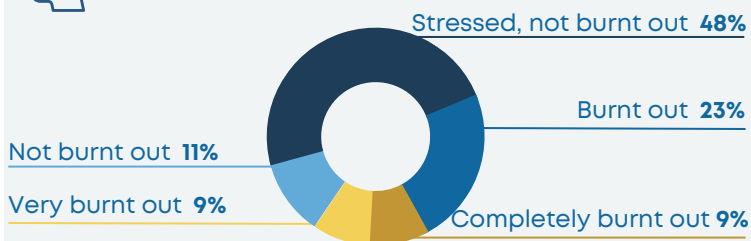


RADIOLOGY CERTIFICATION

Number of radiology exam attempts



BURNOUT



44% reported being busier now with patient load and the need to see more patients per day than any other point in their career



PAY & CAREER SATISFACTION



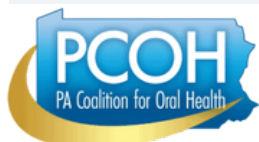
SENTIMENTS TOWARD DENTAL ASSISTING

- **What frustrated respondents about dental assisting:** Pay, lack of benefits, feeling overworked and undervalued, workforce, and lack of a career pathway
- **What excited respondents about dental assisting:** Patient care, helping people, providing meaningful oral health education, working as part of a team, and flexible working hours



I loved working as a dental assistant. I loved the variety that comes with the work. I liked having a part in all areas of the practice, **but at the end of the day dental assistants do not make enough to be able to live comfortably.** I constantly worried about being able to afford food and gas.

I went to a good dental assisting program, but could not afford my student loan payments after with how much I was making. Luckily, with my education it allowed me easier access to go back to dental hygiene school. I **sometimes regret going back into the dental field due to feeling as if I am not valued.**



*Data collected from a survey of DANB RHS-certified dental assistants

2022 PA DENTAL ASSISTANT SURVEY

BACKGROUND, FINDINGS, & NEXT STEPS

INTRODUCTION

Dental assistants (DA) provide a key role in dental offices and health care settings. Like other health care and dental professionals, dental assistants have been affected by the rise in workforce challenges in recent years. In 2022, Pennsylvania Coalition for Oral Health (PCOH) sought to understand the state of dental assistants in PA through disseminating a survey to DAs across the commonwealth.

METHODOLOGY

A list of 10,000 individuals who had passed the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) Radiology Health and Safety (RHS) Exam between 1982-2021 was contacted via mail and email.

The survey had a 3.9% response rate with 391 responses.

81% of respondents reported currently practicing as dental assistants.

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, & REQUIREMENTS

Dental Assistant (DA)

Sterilize equipment, assist chairside, and perform basic supportive dental procedures under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist.

Education requirements:

No formal education requirement, further certification is required to perform dental radiographic procedures

Expanded Function Dental Assistant (EFDA)

In addition to the responsibilities of DAs, EFDAs place fillings and sealants and perform fluoride treatments under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist.

Education requirements:

Graduation from a board-approved program and pass a board-approved written examination

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

Many respondents disagreed with the statement "I work below my standard scope of practice and could have more responsibilities and duties." Over half (59%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, 19% were neutral, and 23% agreed or strongly agreed. A similar trend existed for EFDAs, 54% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 19% were neutral, and 28% agreed or strongly agreed.

PERSONNEL SHORTAGE

Over half (58%) of dental assistants' primary practice setting reported a shortage of personnel and are actively hiring.

RESPONSE BREAKDOWN

	# of respondents	% of responses
EFDA	108	28%
Non-EFDA DA	283	72%

LEAVING THE WORKFORCE

Dental assistants were asked what year they stopped practicing, and to offer a date and their reason(s) for leaving the workforce.

Of 62 respondents who provided a date, 33 (53%) left the workforce after 2020. **Common reasons for leaving included: low pay (26%), family (21%) and a negative workplace environment (13%).** Respondents shared **feeling undervalued, and the stress experienced at work was not worth the low pay.** For those reporting family as a reason for leaving, many left to take care of young children. There was not a significant difference between EFDAs and DAs; 21% respondents who left the workforce were EFDAs. **For EFDAs, a greater percentage left dental assisting, but stayed in the dental profession as hygienists.**

NEXT STEPS FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- » Consider adding a formal dental assisting certification requirement in Pennsylvania
- » Practice management and HR skills should be addressed in dental school curricula
- » Establish in-office training programs and explore financial assistance/scholarship programs offered by recruiting practices