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Guidance: Dental Assistant Certificate vs. Certified Dental Assistant

The purpose of this guidance is to explain the difference between a Dental Assistant Certificate instructional program in a private career school licensed by the Bureau of Proprietary School Supervisor (BPSS) and a Certified Dental Assistant program licensed under the Office of Professions (OP), with the instructional training registered by the Office of College and University Evaluation (OCUE).

Dental Assistant Certificate Program - BPSS

- Private career schools, licensed by BPSS, may be approved to offer instruction leading to a certificate in dental assisting. Approved curricula for the dental assistant certificate program ranges from 84 to 900 hours. Most programs require an internship at a dental facility. The facility must have an Affiliation Agreement with the school.
- The internship supervisor, who is typically a dentist, needs to be cognizant of what duties a student can or cannot perform as part of their internship.
- The Affiliation Agreement, which must be signed by the school director, the dentist or other internship supervisor and the student, was modified in November 2014. The modified Agreement states that a dentist cannot offer comparable clinical training to a BPSS certificate student that is reserved for a student pursuing licensure as a Certified Dental Assistant.
- It has been suggested that the student complete a daily log of tasks done at the internship. The Affiliation Agreement is on the BPSS website: <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/bpss/documents/AFFILIATIONAGREEMENT-DENTAL.pdf>
- The school must develop its own skills checklist for the internship. The skills checklist is specific to the student's training and length of the program and must cover only activities legally allowed to be performed by the student. A basic skills checklist may include: administrative/secretarial office work; providing the dentist with needed tools; taking x-rays; positioning the spittle remover; setting up and

cleaning up rooms between patients; cleaning instruments; sterilizing and bagging instruments; pouring casts; and dental charting.

- Students cannot do any clinical training in the areas restricted to a Certified Dental Assistant unless they are doing so while enrolled in a program registered as licensure-qualifying. No BPSS programs are currently license-qualifying.
- A disclaimer (such as the following) will be required in school catalogs for any school approved to offer a certificate in Dental Assisting:

This certificate of completion will not make a graduate eligible to become licensed as a Certified Dental Assistant by the New York State Education Department, Office of Professions.

- Graduates who obtain a dental assisting certificate, but wish to become a licensed Certified Dental Assistant, will have to complete a licensure-qualifying program despite their having received a certificate of completion from a BPSS-licensed school. No BPSS programs are currently license-qualifying.
- BPSS currently licenses 12 schools which offer a Dental Assisting Certificate Program.

Licensed Certified Dental Assistant – OP

- A *Certified Dental Assistant* is a protected title in New York State and only individuals who have met the requirements and been issued a license to practice by the Office of Professions may use this title.
- The *Certified Dental Assistant* training program must be registered under the Office of College and University Evaluation.
- The scope of practice is defined in Commissioner's Regulations.
- Instructional training typically takes about 12 months and encompasses 24 credit hours or about 1,000 hours of study. The Office of Professions website provides details: <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/dent/dentcdalic.htm>
- There is no exemption from licensing for students of unregistered programs. BPSS Dental Assistant certificate programs are not registered programs and do not lead to licensure. However, schools may apply for approval through the Office of Professional Education Program Review (PEPR).

- Certified Dental Assistant License Requirements: <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/dent/dentcdalic.htm>
- Questions and Answers about becoming a Certified Dental Assistant licensed under the Office of Professions: <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/dent/dentasst.htm>
- The OP website describes tasks which may only be performed by dental assistants who are certified: <http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/dent/> Non-certified assistants – such as BPSS graduates - perform all the rest, including x-rays; cleaning the equipment and acting as second set of hands for the dentist; preparing instruments; and giving them to the dentist as needed.
- According to OP, about 100 people a year become Certified Dental Assistants. As of spring 2015, there are 1,269 certified dental assistants licensed in NYS, and 19,926 licensed dentists.