

Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia

How are Dental Assistant Licensing Fees Determined?

The Role of the Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia

The Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia (PDBNS) has the role of making sure the public is protected when it comes to dental care. The PDBNS is one of 21 health regulators in Nova Scotia. It regulates the professions of dentistry and dental assisting. Other regulated health professions include medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, etc.

The health regulators are different than the professional associations (e.g., Nova Scotia Dental Assistants' Association, Nova Scotia Dental Association, Doctors Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Nurses Union, etc.). These associations have as their mandate to support the members of their profession.

Why Are Health Professions Regulated?

This is because the public and government expect individuals performing health services to have a proper level of training and to be held to a high standard.

The same is true for other non-health professions. For example, when we drive over a bridge or fly in a plane, we want to be confident that the engineers who designed the bridge and the pilots flying the plane know what they are doing. People expect the same level of assurance in healthcare.

Self-Regulation – A Privilege and a Responsibility

Health professions have been granted the privilege of self-regulation. This means that the board and committees overseeing the professions are made up mostly of members of those professions. With that privilege of self-regulation comes the responsibility to protect the public and to do it well. The PDBNS protects the public by:

- developing standards and guidelines
- conducting inspections
- ensuring that continuing education takes place
- dealing with complaints and discipline
- assessing applications to ensure that only qualified people provide treatment

As well, the PDBNS supports national organizations such as National Dental Assisting Examining Board (NDAEB), the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC), and the Canadian Dental Assisting Regulatory Authorities (CDARA). Each of these organizations plays an important role in establishing a high standard for dental assisting in Canada.

Self-regulation requires several things such as staff, board members, committee members, consultants, IT support, legal support, financial auditors, office space, photocopying/printing, courier/postage, software licenses, and insurances. This all requires money.

How Are Licence Fees Determined?

The only source of revenue for the PDBNS comes from the licence fees paid by dentists and dental assistants. There is no funding from government or other sources. This is the same for the regulators of all health professions.

Each September, the PDBNS Finance and Audit Committee presents a budget to be approved by the board. The budget must include the fees which will be needed to cover expenses for the coming year. For any fee changes in the budget, the same % change applies to dentists, dental assistants, and dental corporations. Fees can change over time in response to changing expenses. Here are some trends in licensing fees since 2011:

- 2011 - 30% fee decrease
- 2012 - 15% further fee decrease
- 2012 - 297% fee increase
- 2018-2021 - no fee changes
- 2022 - 25% fee increase
- 2023 - no fee increase
- 2024 – 5% fee increase
- 2025 – 5% fee increase

As a not-for-profit organization, the PDBNS is governed by the [Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act](#) which has strict guidelines about financial accountability. We must operate basically on a revenue neutral basis, meaning that the money in must equal the money out (revenue = expenses). Not-for-profit organizations are

permitted to budget for a small surplus to build a reserve fund for unforeseen circumstances.

The PDBNS' financial records are audited each year by external auditors who scrutinize our financial records to make sure we are following the rules.

Dental Assisting

It may be of interest to note some of the recent ways in which the PDBNS has upheld the standards of dental assisting in the public interest. These have included:

- communicating continually to dentists and dental assistants about the scope of practice for dental assisting and the prohibition of various duties for people who are not licensed as outlined in in the [Dental Act](#) and [Dental Assistants Regulations](#) ([Board Business February 2022](#)),
- providing clarification on scope of practice relating to skills/duties not clearly mentioned in the Act or Regulations ([Board Business July 2023](#)), and
- affirming the pathway for dental assistants to file a formal complaint against their employer if they feel it is warranted and to be protected from retaliation ([Board Business February 2022](#)).