



Nova Scotia Regulator OF DENTISTRY AND DENTAL ASSISTING

Standard of Practice for Dental Assisting



Table of Contents

1.0	Preamble.....	3
2.0	Title Protection	4
3.0	Definitions (for the purposes of this document)	5
4.0	Scope of Practice for Dental Assisting	6
5.0	Supervision, Delegation, and Responsibility.....	7
6.0	Restriction on Services Performed by Dental Assistants	8
7.0	Activities Performed by Non-licensed Individuals	9
8.0	Requirements for Annual Licence Renewal	10
9.0	Acknowledgements	11
10.0	Document History.....	11
11.0	Appendices	12
	Appendix A – First Application for a Dental Assisting Licence in Canada	12
	Appendix B – Application for a Dental Assisting Licence for a Person Currently or Previously Licensed as a Dental Assistant in Another Canadian Province or Territory.....	14
	Appendix C – Currency of Practice Requirements for Dental Assistants	15
	Appendix D – Examples of Intra-Oral Dental Services in the Scope of Practice of Dental Assisting.....	16
	Appendix E – Policy on Professional Liability Insurance for Dental Assistants	17
	Appendix F – Policy on the Delegation of Tooth Whitening Procedures to Dental Assistants	18
1.0	Preamble	18
2.0	Tray-based Whitening Systems for Home Use	18
3.0	In-office External Tooth Whitening	19
4.0	Non-licensed Individuals Working in Oral Healthcare Settings	19
5.0	Tooth Whitening Services Performed Outside Oral Healthcare Settings	19

1.0 Preamble

The Nova Scotia Regulator of Dentistry and Dental Assisting (the “NSRDDA”) is the organization which oversees the practices of dentistry and dental assisting in the province. The role¹ of the NSRDDA, with respect to the practices of dentistry and dental assisting, is to:

- protect the public from harm,
- serve and promote the public interest,
- preserve the integrity of the professions of dentistry and dental assisting, subject to the public interest, and
- maintain the public confidence in the ability of the NSRDDA to regulate dentistry and dental assisting.

One of the ways the NSRDDA fulfills its role is by ensuring that only qualified individuals are registered and licensed as dentists and dental assistants in Nova Scotia. The NSRDDA also establishes practice standards that its registrants must follow.

Dental assistants are essential members of the team of oral health care professionals serving Nova Scotians. They have specialized knowledge, skills, and judgement that are integral to the provision of oral healthcare.

Dental assistants abide by this Standard, as well as other NSRDDA [practice standards and guidelines](#) standards including, but not limited to, the *NSRDDA Standard of Practice for Infection Prevention and Control* and the *NSRDDA Code of Ethics*.

The Qualifications for Registration and Licensing for Dental Assistants can be found in [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#).

The Currency of Practice Requirements for Dental Assistants can be found in [Appendix C](#).

Information on the mandatory Continuing Competence Program can be found [at this link](#).

¹ This is in accordance with Section 6 of the [Regulated Health Professions Act \(RHPA\)](#), modified for profession-specific context.

2.0 Title Protection²

2.1 No person may take or use the title, description or designation of:

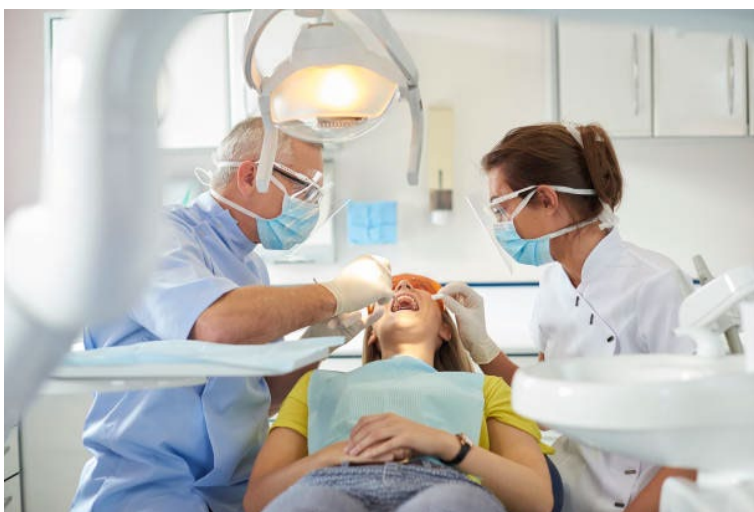
- “dental assistant”,
- the abbreviation “DA”, or
- any derivation or abbreviation of them either alone or in combination with other words, letters or descriptions

unless the person is currently registered and licensed as a dental assistant in Nova Scotia, having met all the requirements for registration and licensing including having obtained their NDAEB³ certificate.

Note: A dental assistant registered and licensed prior to the requirement to obtain an NDAEB certificate shall not be required to obtain an NDAEB certificate to use the title “dental assistant” of any derivation or abbreviation thereof.

2.2 A person who has recently graduated from an accredited dental assisting program and meets all the requirements for registration and licensing but has not yet challenged and passed the NDAEB certification examination:

- may be issued a dental assistant conditional licence,
- will have up to 12 months to pass the NDAEB exam before no longer being eligible for licensure, and
- may use the title “provisional dental assistant” or “provisional DA” only.



² This is in accordance with Sections 19 and 21 of the [Regulations Respecting Dentistry and Dental Assisting](#).

³ NDAEB refers to the [National Dental Assisting Examining Board](#).

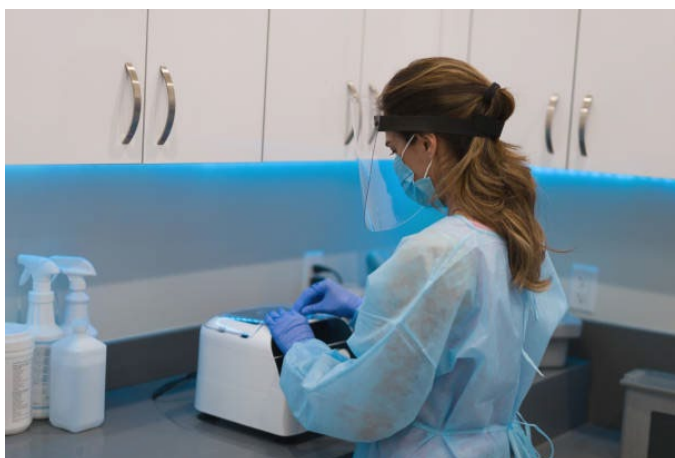
3.0 Definitions (for the purposes of this document)

- 3.1 “board” means the board of the NSRDDA,
- 3.2 “dental assistant” means a person who is currently registered and licensed as a dental assistant in Nova Scotia,
- 3.3 “dental hygienist” means a person who is currently registered and licensed as a dental hygienist in Nova Scotia,
- 3.4 “dentist” means a person who is currently registered and licensed as a dentist in Nova Scotia,
- 3.5 “individual scope of practice” means the services for which a registrant is educated, authorized, and competent to perform⁴,
- 3.6 “irreversible procedures” are ones which result in a permanent change (e.g., to tooth morphology, soft tissue contour, or occlusion) that would require an intervention (e.g., a restoration, surgery, or orthodontic tooth movement) to rectify,
- 3.7 “intra-oral dental services” means services performed within the oral cavity,
- 3.8 “OHCP” means an oral healthcare professional licensed in Nova Scotia,
- 3.9 “registrant in good standing” means a registrant who:
- is not subject to any licensing sanctions or the subject of an unresolved complaint,
 - is not in arrears of any fees or other monies owed to the NSRDDA,
 - has met any continuing competence or practice review requirements, and
 - has met currency of practice requirements.
- 3.10 “Standard” means the NSRDDA *Standard of Practice for Dental Assisting*,
- 3.11 “under the supervision of a licensed dentist or dental hygienist” means that the supervising dentist or dental hygienist is physically present within the office premises.
- “direct supervision” means that the dentist or dental hygienist is present at the point of care (i.e., in the operator),
 - “indirect supervision” means that the dentist or dental hygienist, while not necessarily present at the point of care, is within the office premises and available for consultation, guidance, or assistance.

⁴ This is as defined in Section 2 of the [Regulated Health Professions Act \(RHPA\)](#).

4.0 Scope of Practice for Dental Assisting⁵

- 4.1 The scope of practice of dental assisting is the application of specialized and evidence-based dental assisting knowledge, skills and judgement that:
- 4.1.1 have been taught in an accredited education program⁶, or
 - 4.1.2 are outlined in this Standard.
- 4.2 The scope of practice of dental assisting as described in 4.1 includes the performance of any or all of the following activities:
- 4.2.1 assisting in the provision of intra-oral dental services⁷ (which do not contravene Section 6.1) and exposing radiographs while under the supervision of a dentist or dental hygienist;
 - 4.2.2 performing vital tooth whitening within the guidelines of the NSRDDA [Policy on the Delegation of Tooth Whitening Procedures to Dental Assistants](#) found in Appendix F;
 - 4.2.3 providing oral health and hygiene instruction; and
 - 4.2.4 providing dietary counselling related to oral health.
- 4.3 The scope of dental assisting also includes the following activities as related to the activities and application of specialized and evidence-based dental assisting knowledge, skills and judgement:
- 4.3.1 health promotion,
 - 4.3.2 research,
 - 4.3.3 education,
 - 4.3.4 inter-professional collaboration,
 - 4.3.5 consultation,
 - 4.3.6 management,
 - 4.3.7 administration,
 - 4.3.8 advocacy, and
 - 4.3.9 system development.



⁵ This is in accordance with Section 8 of the [Regulations Respecting Dentistry and Dental Assisting](#).

⁶ An “accredited education program” is a dental assisting program which has been accredited by the [Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada \(CDAC\)](#).

⁷ An inexhaustive list of examples of such intra-oral dental services can be found in [Appendix D](#).

5.0 Supervision, Delegation, and Responsibility

- 5.1 Intra-oral dental services provided by a dental assistant must be:
- 5.1.1 under the supervision of a dentist or dental hygienist,
 - 5.1.2 within the scope of practice of dental assisting,
 - 5.1.3 within the individual scope of practice of the dental assistant,
 - 5.1.4 within the scope of practice of the licensing designation of the supervising practitioner, and
 - 5.1.5 within the individual scope of practice of the supervising practitioner.
- 5.2 If a dental assistant is delegated to take a final impression (either physical or digital) for an intra-oral appliance or prostheses, the delegating/supervising practitioner is ultimately responsible for the evaluation of the impression.
- 5.3 A supervising practitioner must consent to the supervisory role, considering their individual scope of practice and competence to supervise.
- 5.4 A supervising dentist or dental hygienist shall be responsible for all services performed by a dental assistant under their supervision and the supervising dentist or dental hygienist shall be, along with the dental assistant, held accountable for the quality and delivery of those services⁸.



⁸ A supervising dental hygienist must abide by any practice standards established by the Nova Scotia Regulatory of Dental Hygiene, Dental Technology, and Denturism (NSRDHDTD).

6.0 Restriction on Services Performed by Dental Assistants

- 6.1 A dental assistant may not provide any of the following services:
- 6.1.1 diagnosis or treatment planning,
 - 6.1.2 severing or cutting hard or soft tissue,
 - 6.1.3 prescribing or administering drugs,
 - 6.1.4 prescribing any intra-oral appliance or prosthesis,
 - 6.1.5 designing any intra-oral appliance or prosthesis, except under the supervision of a dentist or dental hygienist⁹ who is responsible for the final approval,
 - 6.1.6 placement, condensing, carving, or trimming any restorative material,
 - 6.1.7 taking an impression (other than an interocclusal impression or bite registration) with vinyl polysiloxane (VPS), polysulfide, polyether, or other elastomeric materials,
 - 6.1.8 placement or removal of bonded orthodontic appliances, try-in/cementation/removal of orthodontic bands or brackets, or the activation of orthodontic archwires¹⁰,
 - 6.1.9 the use of any rotary or mechanical device in the oral cavity, except for rubber cup or bristle brush polishing of the coronal surfaces of the teeth,
 - 6.1.10 periodontal probing,
 - 6.1.11 scaling of hard or soft deposits on teeth
 - 6.1.12 placement of periodontal dressing,
 - 6.1.13 adjustment of nightguards/biteplanes/periodontal appliances or removable prostheses; or
 - 6.1.14 any irreversible procedures.



⁹ The intra-oral appliance being designed by the dental assistant must be within the scope of practice of the supervising practitioner to prescribe and design.

¹⁰ It is expected that by 2026, qualified dental assistants will be able to apply for orthodontic advance practice authorization through a process yet to be developed and approved by the NSRDDA board.

7.0 Activities Performed by Non-licensed Individuals

- 7.1 A person who is not a licensed OHCP, and is working in an oral healthcare setting, may perform intra-oral suctioning with saliva ejectors or high-volume evacuators (HVEs) under the direct supervision of a dentist or dental hygienist¹¹.
- 7.2 A person who is not a licensed OHCP, and is working in an oral healthcare setting, shall not:
 - 7.2.1 provide intra-oral dental services¹², with the exception of intra-oral suctioning,
 - 7.2.2 expose radiographs,
 - 7.2.3 engage in tooth whitening procedures,
 - 7.2.4 provide oral health and hygiene instruction, or
 - 7.2.5 provide dietary counselling related to oral health.
- 7.3 A person who is not a licensed OHCP, and is working in an oral healthcare setting, may perform duties which are not outlined in Section 7.2 but shall not use the title “dental assistant”. Examples of activities such non-licensed individuals may perform are operator setup, instrument transfer, operator disinfection, and instrument reprocessing.
- 7.4 A supervising dentist or dental hygienist shall be:
 - 7.4.1 responsible for all duties performed by a person who is not a licensed OHCP and is working in an oral healthcare setting under their supervision,
 - 7.4.2 responsible to ensure that such a person has been adequately trained for the duties being performed, either through on-site training or through an external institution or process; and
 - 7.4.3 held accountable for the quality and performance of those duties.
- 7.5 A student enrolled in an accredited dental assisting education program may engage in the practice of dental assisting if the student is:
 - 7.5.1 authorized by the administrator of the dental assisting education program, and
 - 7.5.2 under the supervision of a dentist or dental hygienist¹³.

¹¹ This is in accordance with Section 12(d) of the [Regulations Respecting Dentistry and Dental Assisting](#).

¹² An inexhaustive list of examples of such intra-oral dental services can be found in [Appendix D](#).

¹³ As per Section 62(3)(a) of the [Regulated Health Professions Act](#).

8.0 Requirements for Annual Licence Renewal

- 8.1 The licensing year for dental assistants is from May 1st to April 30th of the following calendar year.
- 8.2 A dental assistant who has not performed intra-oral dental assisting services within the preceding 5 years is not eligible to renew their licence unless they pass the Clinical Practice Evaluation (CPE) administered by the NDAEB¹⁴.
- 8.3 Any registrant who is audited through the NSRDDA Continuing Competence¹⁵ Program and found to not have completed the minimum requirements shall be ineligible for license renewal until they have obtained the required credit hours to meet the requirements of the program.
- 8.4 The NSRDDA board shall determine the annual licensing fee for dental assistants and communicate that fee to dental assistants no later than March 1st immediately preceding the commencement of the upcoming licensing year.
- 8.5 The annual online licence renewal process will typically open in mid-March. At the time of annual licence renewal, dental assistants will be required to update their online profile, provide information about various aspects of their practice of dental assisting, and upload:
- 8.5.1 verification that they hold personal liability insurance (PLI)¹⁶,
 - 8.5.2 verification of current certification in BLS (for healthcare providers) which must have:
 - been obtained within the previous 12 months,
 - been delivered by a provider approved by the NSRDDA, and
 - included an in-person skills-training component.
- 8.6 The licence renewal process shall be completed, and the annual licensing fee paid to the NSRDDA, on or before April 30th immediately preceding the commencement of the upcoming licensing year.
- 8.7 A dental assistant who plans to not renew their licence for the upcoming licensing year must inform the NSRDDA in writing or via email on or before April 30th of the current licensing year to remain a registrant in good standing.
- 8.8 A dental assistant who has not, by April 30th of the current licensing year:
- 8.8.1 completed their licence renewal process (including payment of fees), or
 - 8.8.2 informed the NSRDDA of their intention to not renew their licence for the upcoming licensing year

shall be unlicensed effective the following day (May 1st) and shall no longer be a registrant in good standing. Such a dental assistant shall have their licence reinstated upon payment of the annual licensing fee for the current licensing year together with the reinstatement fee which shall be 50% of the current year's licensing fee.

¹⁴ NDAEB refers to the [National Dental Assisting Examining Board](#).

¹⁵ This was formerly the Mandatory Continuing Dental Education (MCDE) requirement under the 1992 *Dental Act*.

¹⁶ PLI for dental assistants must be "occurrence-based" and the coverage must be a minimum of \$2 million per occurrence and \$3 million aggregate. A more detailed overview of this requirement can be found in [Appendix E](#).

9.0 Acknowledgements

Appreciation goes to the Nova Scotia Regulator of Dental Hygiene, Dental Technology, and Denturism (NSRDHDTD) for their collaboration on the development of this document.

Appreciation also goes to the following organizations whose documents were helpful in the development of this Standard: the Alberta College of Dental Hygienists (ACDH), the College of Alberta Dental Assistants (CADA), the College of Dental Assistants of Saskatchewan (CDASK), the Manitoba Dental Association (MDA), the National Dental Assisting Examining Board (NDAEB), the New Brunswick Dental Society (NBDS), and the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO).

Over time, the NSRDDA will work collaboratively with the NSRDHDTD, in consultation with stakeholders, to ensure that the parameters for the supervision of dental assistants remain aligned.

10.0 Document History

A draft version of this document was approved by the Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia on March 18, 2025 for circulation to registrants for consultation.

The final version (V26) was approved by the PDBNS Board on April 25, 2025 to come into effect when the PDBNS is migrated under the [*Regulated Health Professions Act \(RHPA\)*](#) which is anticipated to be on May 1, 2025.

Approximate date of next review: 2028

11.0 Appendices

Appendix A – First Application for a Dental Assisting Licence in Canada

- 1.0 Applicants for registration and licensing as a dental assistant for the first time in Canada must complete an online application form which includes payment of a non-refundable application fee and the submission of the following:
- 1.1 A passport-style photo.
 - 1.2 A certified¹⁷ photocopy of their graduation certificate from a dental assisting program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC) or the Commission of Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association, or

If not a graduate of an accredited dental assisting program as described above, the applicant must have been otherwise deemed eligible by the NDAEB¹⁸ to challenge the NDAEB Written Examination and Clinical Practice Evaluation (CPE).
 - 1.3 A letter from the institution where the dental assisting program was completed verifying the date of graduation from the program.
 - 1.4 A certified copy of their Canadian birth certificate, Canadian passport, Canadian citizenship card, or proof of permanent residency status.

If an applicant is not a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada, the applicant must provide details about their current citizenship status and a certified copy of the authorization issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada which permits them to engage in the practice of dental assisting in Canada.
 - 1.5 Two written character references from non-family members who have known the applicant for the past 4 years. The reference letters must:
 - be signed,
 - be dated,
 - indicate how long the person has known the applicant, and
 - have been written within the past 12 months.
 - 1.6 A criminal record check and a vulnerable sector check performed within the previous 12 months.
 - 1.7 Verification of current¹⁹ certification in Basic Life Support (BLS) for healthcare professionals, the training for which must be from a recognized provider and have included an in-person skills-training component.

¹⁷ Information on certifying documents can be found [at this link](#).

¹⁸ NDAEB refers to the [National Dental Assisting Examining Board](#).

¹⁹ BLS certification must be current at the time of application submission and date of registration and licensing.

1.8 Verification that they hold personal liability insurance (PLI)²⁰.

1.9 A copy of their NDAEB²¹ certificate.

Applicants who are new graduates and who have not yet been issued an NDAEB certificate may be granted a conditional licence and will have up to 12 months from the date of initial licensure to obtain their NDAEB certificate before no longer being eligible for licensure.

The name of an individual who have not obtained their NDAEB certificate within 12 months of initial licensure will be removed from the dental assistants register.

2.0 A certificate of standing must be sent directly to the NSRDDA from the regulatory body in every jurisdiction where the applicant has previously been licensed as a healthcare professional (if applicable).

3.0 If the applicant has not been previously licensed as a dental assistant in Canada but has worked as a dental assistant in a province that does not regulate dental assistants (Quebec and Ontario), they will need to provide proof that they have performed intra-oral dental assisting services within the previous 5 years.

This proof could be in the form of a letter from an employer or a signed affidavit.

If the currency of practice requirement as described above is not met, the applicant will be required to pass the NDAEB's Clinical Practice Evaluation (CPE) which has, as a prerequisite, the successful completion of the NDAEB Written Examination.

4.0 Once a complete application with all supporting documentation has been received, it will be reviewed by the registrar who will determine if it is necessary to obtain additional information.

5.0 If the registrar and/or the registration and licensing committee determine that an applicant meets the criteria for registration and licensing, NSRDDA staff will contact the applicant to arrange a licensing meeting.

6.0 Following the licensing meeting and final approval of the application, the applicant will be required to pay the non-refundable initial registration fee and the non-refundable annual licence fee. (If a licence is being issued more than 6 months into the current licensing year, the licensing fee will be 50% of the annual licensing fee.)

7.0 Applicants who have been declined registration and licensure may request a review of the decision to the registration and licensing review committee. The request must be submitted within 30 days of the applicant being informed of the decision being appealed. The process for this review is outlined [at this link](#).

²⁰ PLI for dental assistants must be "occurrence-based" and the coverage must be a minimum of \$2 million per occurrence and \$3 million aggregate. A more detailed overview of this requirement and the process for obtaining it can be found in [Appendix E](#).

²¹ NDAEB refers to the [National Dental Assisting Examining Board](#).

Appendix B – Application for a Dental Assisting Licence for a Person Currently or Previously Licensed as a Dental Assistant in Another Canadian Province or Territory

1.0 An individual applying for registration and licensing as a dental assistant who is currently or was previously licensed in another Canadian province or territory must complete an online application form which includes payment of a non-refundable application fee (only if not currently licensed elsewhere in Canada) and the submission of the following:

1.1 A passport-style photo.

1.2 A certified²² copy of their Canadian birth certificate, Canadian passport, Canadian citizenship card, or proof of permanent residency status.

If an applicant is not a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada, the applicant must provide details about their current citizenship status and a certified copy of the authorization issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada which permits them to engage in the practice of dental assisting in Canada.

1.3 Two written character references from non-family members who have known the applicant for the past 4 years. The reference letters must:

- be signed,
- be dated,
- indicate how long the person has known the applicant, and
- have been written within the past 12 months.

1.4 A criminal record check and a vulnerable sector check performed within the previous 12 months.

1.5 Verification of current²³ certification in Basic Life Support (BLS) for healthcare professionals, the training for which must be from a recognized provider and have included an in-person skills-training component.

1.6 Verification that they hold personal liability insurance (PLI)²⁴.

²² Information on certifying documents can be found [at this link](#).

²³ BLS certification must be current at the time of application submission and date of registration and licensing.

²⁴ PLI for dental assistants must be “occurrence-based” and the coverage must be a minimum of \$2 million per occurrence and \$3 million aggregate. A more detailed overview of this requirement and the process for obtaining it can be found in [Appendix E](#).

- 2.0 A certificate of standing must be sent directly to the NSRDDA from the regulatory body in every jurisdiction where the applicant has previously been licensed as a healthcare professional (if applicable).
- 3.0 Applicants who were previously but are not currently licensed in another province will need to provide proof that they have worked for a minimum of 900 hours performing intra-oral dental assisting services within the previous 5 years.

This proof could be in the form of a letter from an employer or a sworn affidavit from the applicant.

If the currency of practice requirement as described above is not met, the applicant will be required to pass the NDAEB's Clinical Practice Evaluation (CPE) which has, as a prerequisite, the successful completion of the NDAEB Written Examination.

- 4.0 Once a complete application with all supporting documentation has been received, it will be reviewed by the registrar who will determine if it is necessary to obtain additional information.
- 5.0 If the registrar and/or the registration and licensing committee determine that an applicant meets the criteria for registration and licensing, NSRDDA staff will contact the applicant to arrange a licensing meeting.
- 6.0 Following the licensing meeting and final approval of the application, the applicant will be required to pay the non-refundable annual licence fee. (If a licence is being issued more than 6 months into the current licensing year, the licensing fee will be 50% of the annual licence fee.)
- 8.0 Applicants who have been declined registration and licensure may request a review of the decision to the registration and licensing review committee. The request must be submitted within 30 days of the applicant being informed of the decision being appealed. The process for this review is outlined [at this link](#).

Appendix C – Currency of Practice Requirements for Dental Assistants

A dental assistant who is an NSRDDA registrant but who has not performed intra-oral dental assisting services within the previous 5 years is not eligible to renew their license or have it reinstated unless they pass the Clinical Practice Evaluation (CPE) administered by the NDAEB²⁵.

²⁵ NDAEB refers to the [National Dental Assisting Examining Board](#).

Appendix D – Examples of Intra-Oral Dental Services in the Scope of Practice of Dental Assisting

Below is an inexhaustive list of intra-oral dental services which are within the scope of practice of dental assisting.

- Application and removal of matrix systems and wedges
- Application of anti-cariogenic agents
- Application of desensitizing agents
- Application of pit and fissure sealants
- Application of topical anesthetic agents
- Application of etch, bonding agents, and treatment liners in cavity preparations without pulpal involvement
- Creation of bite registrations
- Making facebow transfer records
- Obtaining physical dental impressions with materials other than vinyl polysiloxane (VPS)
- Obtaining digital/optical dental impressions (i.e., intra-oral scanning)
- Performing suture removal
- Performing coronal polishing
- Performing vital tooth whitening within the guidelines of the NSRDDA [Policy on the Delegation of Tooth Whitening Procedures to Dental Assistants](#).
- Placement and removal of dental dam
- Placement and removal of moisture control equipment (e.g., cotton rolls, gauze)
- Producing intra-oral radiographic images
- Removal of periodontal dressing (not placement)

A person who is not a licensed oral OHCP, and is working in an oral healthcare setting, may not perform any of the above intra-oral dental services with the exception of performing intra-oral suctioning with saliva ejectors or high-volume evacuators (HVEs) under the direct supervision of a dentist or dental hygienist²⁶.

In addition to what is set out above, as stated in 7.2 of the *Standard of Practice for Dental Assisting*, a person who is not a licensed OHCP, and is working in an oral healthcare setting, shall not:

- expose radiographs,
- engage in tooth whitening procedures,
- provide oral health and hygiene instruction, or
- provide dietary counselling related to oral health,

all of which are in the scope of practice of dental assisting.

²⁶ This is in accordance with Section 21(d) of the [Regulations Respecting Dentistry and Dental Assisting](#).

Appendix E – Policy on Professional Liability Insurance for Dental Assistants

- 1.0 Effective May 1, 2025, dental assistants in Nova Scotia are required to have professional liability insurance (PLI) or another form of malpractice coverage or liability protection.²⁷
- 2.0 Verification of PLI will need to be provided to the NSRDDA:
 - 2.1 by applicant dental assistants at the time of initial application for registration and licensure, and
 - 2.2 during the annual license renewal process.
- 3.0 Acceptable PLI policies for dental assistants must offer a minimum coverage of:
 - 3.1 \$2 million per occurrence, and
 - 3.2 \$3 million aggregate (i.e., during the 12-month term of the policy).
- 4.0 Acceptable PLI policies for dental assistants must be specific to dental assisting.
- 5.0 Acceptable PLI policies for dental assistants must be “**occurrence-based**”. This means that the policy holder is covered for events that occur while they are licensed and insured, even if they are not licensed and insured when the claim is made.

Policies which operate on a “**claims-made**” basis, which means coverage is only applicable if the claim is reported during the policy period, are not acceptable.

²⁷ The requirement for all registrants to hold PLI is outlined in the [Regulations Respecting Dentistry and Dental Assisting](#).

Appendix F – Policy on the Delegation of Tooth Whitening Procedures to Dental Assistants

1.0 Preamble

The Nova Scotia Regulator of Dentistry and Dental Assisting (NSRDDA) and the Nova Scotia Regulator of Dental Hygiene, Dental Technology, and Denturism (NSRDHDTD) both consider that tooth whitening is best provided in an oral healthcare setting in the context of comprehensive care.

This Policy outlines the requirements set out for:

- dentists whose patients are to undergo tooth whitening procedures, and
- dental assistants to whom tooth whitening services are delegated by dentists.

The Policy that dental hygienists must follow is outlined in Appendix A of the *NSRDHDTD Practice Standards: Dental Assistants —Supervision and Delegation by Dental Hygienists*.

When tooth whitening services are performed in a dental office, or in any oral healthcare setting where these services are prescribed, delegated, or supervised by a dentist, it is the dentist who is responsible for:

- performing a comprehensive oral examination, which includes evaluating the patient for caries and defective restorations,
- assessing the patient's suitability for tooth whitening, considering their oral and general health status,
- communicating treatment options to the patient,
- developing the treatment plan, including prescribing the whitening system to be used and the concentration of the whitening agent,
- obtaining informed consent for the treatment proposed,
- ensuring that all recordkeeping guidelines are met, and
- monitoring the progress of the treatment and evaluating the outcome.

Under the [Regulations Respecting Dentistry and Dental Assisting](#), dental assistants may provide intra-oral dental services under the supervision of a dentist or a dental hygienist. Various services related to tooth whitening may be delegated to dental assistants²⁸.

When delegating to a dental assistant, a dentist must ensure that the services are within the scope of practice for dental assisting and that the individual dental assistant possesses the required knowledge, skills, and judgment to deliver the services. A dentist's ultimate responsibility to their patient is not affected by the delegation of duties.

2.0 Tray-based Whitening Systems for Home Use

Once a dentist has fulfilled their obligations set out in Section 1.0, they may delegate a dental assistant to:

- take impressions,
- fabricate models and whitening trays,
- fit whitening trays,
- dispense whitening trays to patients with the tooth whitening agent and instructions for use, and
- take any photographs requested by the dentist or dental hygienist.

²⁸ A "dental assistant" means a person who is currently registered and licensed as a dental assistant in Nova Scotia.

3.0 In-office External Tooth Whitening

A dentist may delegate various services related to in-office external tooth whitening, including whitening which is activated or accelerated using a non-laser light source.

Once a dentist has fulfilled their obligations set out in Section 1.0, they may delegate a dental assistant to:

- prepare a patient for the application of the whitening agent (i.e., achieve proper isolation and soft tissue protection),
- apply the whitening agent and light²⁹ (if applicable) for the prescribed time once the dentist or dental hygienist has verified that the isolation and soft tissue protection are adequate;
- remove the whitening agent and isolation devices, and
- take any photographs requested by the dentist or dental hygienist.

4.0 Non-licensed Individuals Working in Oral Healthcare Settings

An individual who is not a licensed oral healthcare provider (OHCP) and who is working in an oral healthcare setting may not perform the services outlined in Sections 2.0 and 3.0 of this policy (with the exception of taking photographs).

5.0 Tooth Whitening Services Performed Outside Oral Healthcare Settings

Licensed OHCPs are expected to follow all practice standards established by their regulatory body, regardless of where the services are performed. These include, but are not limited to:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| • health history assessment, | • recordkeeping, |
| • medical emergency preparedness, | • privacy, |
| • infection control, | • advertising, and |
| • informed consent, | • working under supervision (as applicable). |

Dental assistants are therefore not permitted to provide tooth whitening services independently, without the supervision of a dentist or dental hygienist, or in a setting where the practice standards listed above are not met.

In Canada, all tooth whitening systems (unless they contain fluoride) are considered “cosmetics” by Health Canada. The sale of such products is not restricted to healthcare providers. While tooth whitening services fall within the scope of practice of dentistry, dental hygiene, and dental assisting, tooth whitening is also considered to be in the public domain. Therefore, neither the NSRDDA nor the NSRDHDTD have regulatory authority where tooth whitening services are provided by a person who is not an OHCP in an independent business outside an oral healthcare setting.

However, both the NSRDDA and the NSRDHDTD prohibit its registrants from engaging in whitening services unless all professional standards are met, regardless of the setting.

²⁹ Dental assistants are not permitted to activate or accelerate whitening agents with a laser.