

SALT LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DENTAL HYGIENE PROGRAM

Essential Functions

Essential skills are non-academic criteria used in the admission, promotion, and graduation of students. They include industry specific standards and published discipline specific skills critical for the safe and reasonable practice of Dental Hygiene. They also protect qualified persons with disabling conditions against discrimination. Essential skills are concrete statements of the minimum physical, sensory/motor, communication, behavioral/social, mental/emotional, and environmental requirements for normal and safe professional function. They are intended to inform the prospective student/professional of the attributes, characteristics, and abilities essential to dental hygiene practice. Professional competency is the summation of many cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. The College has a moral and ethical responsibility to select, educate, and certify competent and non-maleficent students and practitioners. Patient health and safety is the sole benchmark against which we measure all performance requirements, including the essential skills addressed in this document. The following categories of essential functions that successful dental hygienists demonstrate are adapted from Midwestern State University Texas.

COMMUNICATION - VERBAL, AUDITORY AND WRITTEN

Communication is the “effective transmission or interchange of facts, attitudes, opinions or thoughts through words, gestures or other means”. “Skill is critical because, tact, ingenuity judgment and cultural sensitivity are taxed to the fullest in an attempt to obtain accurate and complete information from” patients, parents, guardians, or caregivers. “Maintenance of complete records for every aspect of care provided for each patient is a key aspect of dental hygiene practice” (Wilkins’). Communication skills must be sufficient to permit the student to transmit, deliver, receive, and interpret verbal and non-verbal communication to and from the patient, instructor, peer students and staff personnel. In order to communicate with patients and other professionals, the student must:

- Demonstrate English language communication skills sufficient for interaction with others in verbal and written form (communication is clear and understandable to others).

OBSERVATION AND SENSORY SKILLS

Students are required to visually assess, recognize, and interpret variations or signs of disease in normal hard and soft anatomic structures. They must be able to recognize and react to signs of a medical emergency.

Visual acuity must be sufficient and adequate to allow the student to:

- Possess appropriate depth perception with vision from a distance of 18 inches with or without corrective lenses.
- Differentiate between shades of gray on radiographs to determine quality and identify anatomy.
- Differentiate between color variations in tissues to distinguish between normal and abnormal.
- Read control panels, technique charts, and other pertinent materials for patient care and professional practice.
- Demonstrate adequate depth perception in the instrumentation of tooth structures. Hearing abilities must be sufficient to allow the student to communicate with and evaluate patients.

The student must be able to:

- Evaluate stethoscope sounds in the monitoring of blood pressure and respiratory dysfunctions.
- Hear normal speaking level sounds and various voice ranges.
- Hear auditory alarms and telephones.

PHYSICAL QUALIFICATIONS, MOTOR FUNCTION, AND MOTOR FUNCTION

Students must have the physical ability to tolerate the ongoing use of approved personal protective devices including face masks, face shields, safety eyewear, surgical gloves, and laboratory coats. They are also required to carry out Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Organization for Safety and Asepsis Procedures (OSAP) including proper hand hygiene with an alcohol-based formulation or soap and water as well as the safe handling and application of cleaners and chemicals.

Students must be able to perform all functions and tasks required of a dental hygienist. A person with certain musculoskeletal conditions may have difficulty performing the daily activities required by the profession of dental hygiene. These include, but are not limited to, degenerative conditions or injuries to the neck, back, shoulder, elbow, wrist and/or hands. Examples: herniated or bulging disks, chronic rotator cuff symptoms, and carpal tunnel. It is strongly recommended that individuals with any of these conditions be evaluated by their physician prior to pursuing the dental hygiene degree.

Motor functions must be sufficient to permit the student to be able to:

- Manipulate dental equipment and dental hygiene instruments with eye-hand coordination with both hands.
- Manipulate dental radiographic equipment unassisted.
- Use upper body strength to assist patients in emergency situations (perform CPR)
- Lift 25 pounds (strength to assist patient in transferring into a dental chair from a wheelchair)
- Sit/stand unassisted for long periods of times at a level to provide safe and effective patient care.
- Demonstrate fine and gross motor skills necessary to provide safe and effective dental hygiene instrumentation and the administration of local anesthesia.
- Write clearly and neatly with pen.
- Use a computer keyboard and mouse.
- Demonstrate tactile abilities to allow for physical assessment using palpation and exploring and working strokes with dental hygiene instruments.
- Sustain repetitive push, pull and rotation movements of hands at the wrist.

CONCEPTUAL/ANALYTICAL REASONING

Perform treatment modalities using concepts and judgments that are the standards of care for the Dental Hygiene profession.

Students must be able to demonstrate critical thinking skills deemed appropriate for the academic level and discipline content.

A student must be able to:

- Comprehend and integrate knowledge from didactic courses and professional literature into the assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of dental hygiene treatment.
- Demonstrate long and short-term memory

BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS

Respect and maintain FERPA/HIPAA Privacy and confidential personal information guidelines. Demonstrate respect and caring for all patients. Demonstrate sensitive responses to patients in clinical settings. Interact with peers, patients, staff, and faculty in an emotionally stable, professional, and ethical manner. Respect diversity of cultures among clinical patients (i.e., patient condition, periodontal health etc.), college personnel and peers. Demonstrate team approach in carrying out responsibilities in all settings whether in clinical rotation, classroom, or offsite rotation.

A student must be able to:

- Monitor his/her emotions. Manage strong emotions (such as grief and anger) in a professional manner.
- Perform multiple responsibilities concurrently.
- Adapt to a changing environment/stress and deal with the unexpected (such as in a crisis situation).
- Provide treatment and services to all patients/clients without discrimination
- Treat others with respect
- Work effectively as a team member with dentists, faculty, staff, rotation site personnel and other dental and dental hygiene students.

I UNDERSTAND THE ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DENTAL HYGIENE PROGRAM.

Student Name Print: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____