



**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF STATE PERSONNEL
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MICHAEL F. EASLEY
GOVERNOR

THOMAS H. WRIGHT
STATE PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM

TO: Local Health Directors

FROM: Patrick McCoy, PHR, CPM
Program Team Leader
Local Government HR Services

DATE: June 9, 2003

RE: **Dental Assistant Positions**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick McCoy".

Over the past several months, we have been reviewing the use of the Dental Assistant class at the state, university and local levels. In addition, we have compiled and analyzed available labor market data in order to determine the various compensation levels in the Dental Assistant classification across the state. This review was in response to concerns expressed by local health directors that the salary grade level is insufficient to attract and retain Dental Assistants who are classified by the NC Board State Board of Dental Examiners as a Dental Assistant II (DA II).

Clearly, a person with a Dental Assistant II designation is of great value for a dental clinic in a local health department because of the broader range of duties, which can be delegated. The use of an "expanded duty" DA II in clinical dentistry allows for more patient care services to be delivered and makes a dental practice more efficient and productive. Additionally, the majority of private practitioners who state a preference for employing DA II's compensate these dental assistants at a higher salary in recognition of their additional training/education, and their ability to increase office income. Since public dental clinics are competing in the same marketplace as private dentists for DA II's, it is obviously apparent that a mechanism must exist to recognize a pay differential for these two classifications of Dental Assistant in the public sector.

Our review included site visits to University of North Carolina Chapel Hill School of Dentistry, North Carolina Department of Correction and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. We focused on all the positions classified as Dental Assistant in these organizations in order to discern if there was any difference in compensation practices based on the dental assistant categorization. Based on our discussions with managers of the dental programs, we were able to determine that persons in the Dental Assistant classification are compensated the same regardless of a DA I or II designation. However, it appears that a majority of these positions are filled with incumbents with the DA II designation. In addition, we did learn that when the University of North Carolina School of Dentistry implemented a special hiring rate that was authorized by the Office of State Personnel that turnover dropped dramatically for the Dental Assistant classification.

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The present statewide special hiring rate for Dental Assistants at the state level is \$26,134 with a minimum rate of \$27,410. These rates became effective on June 1, 2000 and are available to all state agencies and universities across the state that have the Dental Assistant classification. These rates were established based on labor market surveys conducted at that time and included private practice data where it was available.

Please find attached a salary survey of the Dental Assistant classification for all State agencies, public universities and local health departments. I would strongly advise those agencies that are below the labor market average to move your salary ranges to a competitive labor market rate. Taking this action should decrease turnover in the Dental Assistant classification and allow you to compete for the services of persons with the Dental Assistant II designation. If you have positions classified as Dental Assistant and you do not require a DA II designation, we would recommend that they be classified as a Medical Office Assistant. A copy of this classification specification is attached for your review and consideration. This classification can be used for positions that provide only chairside assistance to a Dentist with no delegation of "expanded duties" as defined in the dental statute.

Please note these recommendations were developed with the assistance of Dr. Rick Mumford and Dennis Harrington in the Department of Health and Human Services - Division of Public Health. If you have any questions or need any clarification, please do not hesitate to contact your local OSP HR consultant.

PJM/ms

Attachments

c: Stephen E. Davis
Dennis Harrington
Dr. Rick Mumford
OSP Local Government HR Consultants