

Commission on Dental Accreditation Staff Biographical Information

Office of the Commission

Dr. Sherin Tooks, EdD, MS, senior director, Commission on Dental Accreditation and CODA Operations

Dr. Sherin Tooks has been with the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) since January 2002. Dr. Tooks was appointed as CODA Director in November 2012, and CODA Senior Director in January 2023. Prior to her appointment as Senior Director, Dr. Tooks held discipline-specific Manager positions within the Commission. Dr. Tooks provides full oversight of the operations of the Commission and serves as staff secretary of the Commission's Standing and Ad Hoc Committees. In her 22+ years with CODA, Dr. Tooks has guided the Commission through important initiatives, including strategic planning, re-recognition by the United States Department of Education (USDE), development of communication and technology strategies, revisions of CODA Standards, and CODA's development of an electronic accreditation platform. Dr. Tooks holds a Master of Science degree in dental hygiene education, from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Dentistry, and a Doctor of Education degree, with an emphasis in educational leadership, from the University of Phoenix.

Ms. Peggy Soeldner, MEd, senior manager, Administration and Committees

Ms. Peggy Soeldner has been with the Commission for more than 25 years. During this time, she has supported advanced dental education, specifically, the disciplines of advanced education in general dentistry, general practice residency, dental anesthesiology, oral medicine and orofacial pain. In Fall 2024, Peggy transitioned to the role of Senior Manager, Administration and Committees, which supports the strategic direction of the working closely with the Senior Director. Additionally, Peggy supports all standing and ad hoc committees of the Commission. Peggy also leads and supports CODA managers, particularly in joint work efforts related to Commission meeting preparation and Commission projects. Prior to joining CODA, Ms. Soeldner worked in student services and admissions at the University of Chicago, Pritzker School of Medicine. Peggy holds a Master of Science degree in Adult and Continuing Education from Northern Illinois University.

Discipline-Specific Managers

Ms. Jamie Asher Hernandez, MS, manager, Allied Dental Education

Ms. Jamie Asher Hernandez supports CODA's accreditation program for allied dental education, working specifically with dental assisting and dental laboratory technology education programs. Jamie also supports the Commission's allied dental education Review Committees and serves as a resource to CODA's communities of interest related to dental assisting and dental laboratory technology education matters. Jamie began her career as an educator and has worked for several associations and nonprofit organizations. Prior to joining CODA, Jamie worked at the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics. At the Academy, Jamie served as an accreditation and education manager with the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition & Dietetics (ACEND) and also served as a manager with the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) focusing on professional development for dietitians and dietetic technicians. Jamie holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from the University of Holy Cross in New Orleans, Louisiana and a Master of Science degree in Public Service Management with a focus in nonprofit management from DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois.

Ms. Katie Navickas, BSDH, MA, manager, Allied Dental Education

Ms. Katie Navickas supports the CODA accreditation program for allied dental education, working specifically with dental hygiene education programs. Katie also supports the Commission's allied dental education Review Committees and serves as a resource to the Commission's communities of interest related to dental hygiene education matters. Prior to joining CODA, Katie held an Adjunct Faculty position in the Health Sciences Department at the College of DuPage Dental Hygiene Program for eight (8) years. Katie has also worked in several roles in dental practice operations and administration, including functioning as the Head Hygiene Clinical Coordinator in a dental service organization. She has acted as a Clinical Hygiene Consultant and Professional Educator for other dental care focused companies. Katie received her Master of Arts in Communication with a focus on Health Care Leadership from Eastern Illinois University, her Bachelor of Applied Science in Dental Hygiene from the University of Bridgeport, and her Associate of Applied Science in Dental Hygiene from Lake Land College. Katie holds a current Registered Dental Hygienist license in Illinois.

Dr. Yesenia Ruiz, EdD, manager, Advanced Dental Education

Dr. Yesenia Ruiz supports CODA's accreditation program for the advanced dental education disciplines of endodontics, oral and maxillofacial surgery (residency and fellowship), periodontics, orthodontics and dentofacial orthopedics, and fellowship programs in craniofacial and special care orthodontics and the respective Review Committees. Yesenia began her career in the healthcare field in different support roles, including the inaugural role as the program coordinator in a family medicine residency program in Greer, South Carolina. Prior to joining CODA, Yesenia was the Accreditation Administrator for the Obstetrics and Gynecology Review Committee at the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) in Chicago, Illinois. Dr. Ruiz holds a Bachelor of Business Administration with a concentration in healthcare management from Anderson University, a Master of Science in Organization Leadership from Anderson University, and a Doctor of Education in Professional Leadership from Converse University.

Ms. Kelly Stapleton, MEd, manager, Predoctoral Dental Education

Ms. Stapleton supports CODA's accreditation program for predoctoral dental education and dental therapy education programs and provides staff support for the Review Committee of Predoctoral Dental Education. Kelly also assists on consultation activities for international dental education programs and supports the Standing Committee on International Accreditation. Prior to joining CODA, Kelly began her career as a classroom teacher in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Chicago, Illinois. Kelly transitioned to higher education administration where she supported the knowledge and behavioral assessment programs at Rush University Medical College in Chicago, Illinois. Kelly holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Education and Sociology from Marquette University, a Professional Educator License in the state of Illinois, and a Master of Science in Education degree in Educational Leadership from Indiana University Bloomington.

Ms. Taylor Weast, MEd, manager, Advanced Dental Education

Ms. Taylor Weast supports CODA's accreditation program for the advanced dental education disciplines of dental public health, oral and maxillofacial pathology, oral and maxillofacial radiology, pediatric dentistry, and prosthodontics. Prior to joining CODA, Taylor worked at Purdue University for 10 years in roles including undergraduate and graduate student advising, online student services, and most recently as an operations and project specialist. Ms. Weast holds a Bachelor of General Studies degree from Indiana University Indianapolis (formerly IUPUI) and a Master of Education degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs from Indiana University Bloomington.

Communication and Data Management

Ms. Jess Lynk, BA, manager, Communications and Data Management

Ms. Jess Lynk supports CODA's development and execution of internal and external communication strategies with its broad communities of interest. Jess also oversees data management and technology tools for CODA. Jess began her career at the Greater Chicago Food Depository, assisting with communications and public relations. She has since worked for several nonprofit organizations in Chicago. Prior to CODA, Jess worked as the Director of Marketing & Technology at a disability nonprofit, where she focused on enhancing their communication, data, and technology infrastructure. Jess holds a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication from Drake University.