

REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON DENTAL ASSISTING PROGRAM CLOSURE AND DISCONTINUANCE OF ACCREDITATION

Background: At the Summer 2023 meeting, the Review Committee on Dental Assisting Education (DA RC), discussed the decline in Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA)-accredited dental assisting programs due to program closure, program discontinuance, and teach-out. The DA RC discussed the information gathered on program closures and discontinuances of accreditation, noting programs have found it difficult to hire faculty with the current faculty requirements in the Accreditation Standards for Dental Assisting Education Programs; many states do not require graduation from a CODA-accredited dental assisting program to practice as a dental assistant; institutions can operate non-CODA-accredited dental assisting programs; and institutions find it costly to operate a CODA-accredited dental assisting program. The DA RC believed that an Ad Hoc Committee should be formed and include members of the DA RC and CODA Commissioners who are dentists and dental educators to further review the issue of CODA-accredited dental assisting program voluntary discontinuance of accreditation. The DA RC also believed that requesting data from other dental associations could be helpful to study this topic. At its Summer 2023 meeting, the Commission on Dental Accreditation directed the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee of available members of the Dental Assisting Review Committee and Commissioners who are dentists and dental educators to further study the trend of voluntary withdrawal of CODA accreditation by CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs, with a report for further consideration by the Dental Assisting Review Committee and Commission in Winter 2024.

In Winter 2024, the DA RC considered the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Dental Assisting Program Closure and Discontinuance of Accreditation (**Appendix 1**). The DA RC agreed with the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations and noted it recently recommended, and the Commission concurred, that Standard 3-6 be revised to allow dental assisting faculty time to complete educational degrees while teaching in a CODA-accredited dental assisting program. It was also noted that students now seek shorter programs and may move from dental assisting into dental hygiene due to enhanced salary opportunities.

The DA RC also noted that the American Dental Assistants Association (ADAA), as the professional association that advocates for dental assistants, should work with the American Dental Association (ADA) and others to increase understanding of the value of hiring graduates of CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. The DA RC also noted that the ADA's Council on Dental Education and Licensure (CDEL) was directed through the 2024 ADA House of Delegates to study the issue of encouraging students into allied dental programs and careers. The DA RC believed that CODA should communicate with the CDEL to urge CDEL and the ADA to support and encourage students to attend CODA-accredited dental assisting programs as a pathway to the profession.

Following considerable discussion, the DA RC also concurred with the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee that the Commission obtain additional information from its broad community of interest related to the decline in CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. Following collection and review of the data from CODA's communities of interest, the Commission's Ad Hoc Committee on Dental Assisting Program Closure and Discontinuance of Accreditation could continue its review of the topic of program closures and discontinuance of dental assisting education programs to formulate strategies that may be used by the Commission to reduce the decline in CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs.

At its Winter 2024 meeting, following review of the recommendations of the DA RC, the Commission directed:

- 1) that the Commission on Dental Accreditation communicate with the CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs, the American Dental Association (ADA), American Dental Assistants Association (ADAA), Dental Assisting National Board (DANB), state dental boards, and state dental associations, to request information on program closures.
- 2) that the Commission on Dental Accreditation direct development of educational materials for the public and academic institutions to emphasize the value of CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs.
- 3) that the Commission on Dental Accreditation direct a formal communication to the American Dental Association's Council on Dental Education and Licensure (ADA-CDEL) to urge CDEL and the ADA to support and encourage students to attend CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs as a pathway to the profession.

Winter 2025 Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee: As directed by the Commission, in June/July 2024 a survey was distributed to CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs, the ADA, ADAA, DANB, state dental boards, and state dental associations, to request information on program closures. The survey was distributed on June 20, 2024 with two (2) reminders prior to survey closure on July 15, 2024. The survey was sent to 227 dental assisting programs with 137 responses (60% response rate); 107 state dental boards and state dental associations with 25 responses (23% response rate); and three (3) national dental organizations with one (1) response (33% response rate).

January 14, 2025 Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee: The Ad Hoc Committee conducted a virtual meeting on January 14, 2025. **Ad Hoc Committee Members:** Ms. Jill Day (Chair and Commissioner), Dr. Wil Abshier (DA RC Member), Ms. Julie Bera (DA RC Member), Ms. Heather Ferris (DA RC Member), Dr. Keith Mays (Commissioner), Ms. Christina Ross (DA RC Member), Dr. Kenneth Sadler (Commissioner), Dr. Glenn Sameshima (Commissioner) were in attendance. Dr. Nancy Rosenthal (Commissioner) and Ms. Diana Williams (DA RC Member) were unable to attend. **Commissioners:** Dr. Frank Licari, chair, and Dr. Cataldo Leone, vice chair, *ex-officio*, Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) were in attendance. **Commission Staff:** Dr. Sherin Tooks, senior director, CODA, Ms. Peggy Soeldner, senior manager, and Ms.

Jamie Asher Hernandez, Mr. Shawn Morrison, Dr. Yesenia Ruiz, and Ms. Kelly Stapleton, managers, CODA were also in attendance.

The Ad Hoc Committee began its discussion with a review of background information, including the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Dental Assisting Program Closure and Discontinuance of Accreditation (**Appendix 1**). The Ad Hoc Committee also reviewed recent Annual Survey data on dental assisting education programs (**Appendix 2**), the Commission's letter to the ADA's Council on Dental Education and Licensure (**Appendix 3**), as well as survey data collected from dental assisting education programs (**Appendix 4**), and state dental boards and state dental associations (**Appendix 5**), following the CODA-directed survey on dental assisting program closure. The Committee noted that due to the response rate of national dental organizations (N=1), the survey data of this group was not distributed; however, responses generally aligned with other response data received.

The Ad Hoc Committee noted that between 2020 to 2024 eight (8) new dental assisting programs were accredited by CODA, while 26 programs discontinued accreditation. The Committee also noted differences in perceptions of CODA-accredited dental assisting programs compared to state dental associations and dental boards related to the challenges faced by recently closed programs. From the program perspective, key factors for program closure included: lack of state requirements to attend a CODA-accredited program, low perceived return on investment, decline in student interest in the profession, and difficulty recruiting and retaining faculty. From the state dental associations' and dental boards' perspective, key factors for program closure included: difficulty recruiting and retaining faculty, insufficient funding, inadequate facilities and resources, and students deterred by the length and/or time commitment of the program.

When asked about the potential reasons for declining enrollment over the past 10 years, CODA-accredited programs reported the following: lack of state requirements to attend a CODA-accredited program, low perceived return on investment, decline in student interest in the profession, and students deterred by the length and/or time commitment of the program. When asked the same question on the potential reasons for declining enrollment over the past 10 years, state dental associations and state dental boards reported the following: decline in student interest in the profession, difficulty recruiting and retaining faculty, students deterred by the length and/or time commitment of the program, and lack of state requirements to attend a CODA-accredited program. The Committee also noted that reasons given by admissions/career guidance counselors as the reasons why students are not interested in dental assisting education include: pay levels, lack of state requirements to attend a CODA-accredited program, and students deterred by the length and/or time commitment of the program.

The Ad Hoc Committee also discussed several topics which have been considered by the Dental Assisting Review Committee as it continues to revise its Standards in association with the recent Validity and Reliability Study, including program length, admission requirements, and faculty

requirements. The Committee noted that the DA RC thus far believes the program length cannot be reduced given the extensive amount of information needed in the dental assisting curriculum.

Following discussion, the Ad Hoc Committee concluded that the survey response information should be distributed to the American Dental Assistants Association, American Dental Association, and ADA Council on Dental Education and Licensure, urging these organizations to support CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs as entry into the profession. Additionally, the Ad Hoc Committee believed the information could also be shared with dental and dental assisting education programs, dental associations, and dental boards for informational purposes. Finally, the Ad Hoc Committee recommended that the Commission develop a pamphlet for the public and academic programs to emphasize the value of CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs.

Ad Hoc Committee on Dental Assisting Program Closure Recommendation: It is recommended that the Commission on Dental Accreditation direct a communication to the American Dental Assistants Association, American Dental Association, and ADA Council on Dental Education and Licensure, urging their support of CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs as entry into the profession, and providing the survey results collected from dental assisting programs, and state dental associations and dental boards on dental assisting program closures.

It is further recommended that the Commission on Dental Accreditation direct a communication to dental and dental assisting education programs, dental associations, and dental boards, providing the survey results collected from dental assisting programs, and state dental associations and dental boards on dental assisting program closures, for informational purposes.

It is further recommended that the Commission on Dental Accreditation direct a pamphlet be developed and distributed to the public and academic programs to emphasize the value of CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs.

REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON DENTAL ASSISTING PROGRAM CLOSURE AND DISCONTINUANCE OF ACCREDITATION

Background: At the Summer 2023 meeting, the Review Committee on Dental Assisting Education (DA RC), discussed the decline in Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA)-accredited dental assisting programs due to program closure, program discontinuance, and teach-out. The Committee recalled that at a prior meeting (in Summer 2022), the DA RC recommended to CODA that the Standing Committee on Documentation and Policy Reviews review and revise, as needed, the policy and procedure for reporting program closure/discontinuance/teach-out reports to provide the Commission with information as to the reasons why dental assisting programs discontinue CODA-accreditation. The Commission concurred with the recommendation and since revision of the policy, the Commission has collected information from CODA-accredited dental assisting programs that have reported closure/discontinuance/teach-out.

At its Summer 2023 meeting, the DA RC discussed the information gathered on program closures and discontinuances of accreditation, noting programs have found it difficult to hire faculty with the current faculty requirements in the Accreditation Standards for Dental Assisting Education Programs; many states do not require graduation from a CODA-accredited dental assisting program to practice as a dental assistant; institutions can operate non-CODA-accredited dental assisting programs; and institutions find it costly to operate a CODA-accredited dental assisting program.

After lengthy discussion, the DA RC believed that an Ad Hoc Committee should be formed and include members of the DA RC and CODA Commissioners who are dentists and dental educators to further review the issue of CODA-accredited dental assisting program voluntary discontinuance of accreditation. The DA RC also believed that requesting data from other dental associations could be helpful to study this topic.

At its Summer 2023 meeting, the Commission on Dental Accreditation directed the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee of available members of the Dental Assisting Review Committee and Commissioners who are dentists and dental educators to further study the trend of voluntary withdrawal of CODA accreditation by CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs, with a report for further consideration by the Dental Assisting Review Committee and Commission in Winter 2024.

December 12, 2023 Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee: As directed by the Commission, the Ad Hoc Committee on Dental Assisting Program Closure and Discontinuance of Accreditation conducted a virtual meeting on December 12, 2023. The following Ad Hoc Committee members were in attendance: Ms. Martha McCaslin (chair and Commissioner), Dr. Victor Badner (Commissioner), Ms. Julie Bera (DA RC Member), Ms. Kimberly Bland (DA RC Member), Ms.

Heather Ferris (DA RC Member), Dr. Keith Mays (Commissioner), Dr. Kenneth Sadler (Commissioner), and Ms. Diana Williams (DA RC Member). Dr. Nancy Rosenthal (Commissioner) and Dr. Preeti Sahasi (DA RC Member) were unable to attend the meeting. Dr. Sherin Tooks, senior director, CODA, Ms. Jamie Asher Hernandez, manager, Allied Dental Education, Ms. Katie Navickas, manager, Allied Dental Education, Ms. Yesenia Ruiz, manager, Advanced Dental Education, Ms. Peggy Soeldner, manager, Advanced Dental Education, and Ms. Kelly Stapleton, manager, Predoctoral Dental Education, CODA, and Ms. Samara Schwartz, senior associate general counsel, CODA/ADA, were in attendance.

The Committee discussed the charge and background of the Ad Hoc Committee to further review the issue of CODA-accredited dental assisting program voluntary discontinuance of accreditation. The Committee discussed the background materials including:

- dental assisting Annual Accreditation Survey data (**Appendix 1**), noting that survey data indicates a steady decline in dental assisting programs accredited by CODA and program enrollment likewise is declining;
- dental assisting program discontinuances from 2017 through the present, noting 41 dental assisting programs have discontinued accreditation and/or closed since 2017; and
- feedback from Dental Assisting Programs on Reasons for Discontinuance or Closure (dental assisting programs that discontinued in 2023), noting the following reasons for discontinuance/closure: (1) programs have found it difficult to hire faculty with the current faculty requirements in the Accreditation Standards for Dental Assisting Education Programs; (2) many states do not require graduation from a CODA-accredited dental assisting program to practice as a dental assistant; (3) institutions can operate non-CODA-accredited dental assisting programs; and (4) institutions find it costly to operate a CODA-accredited dental assisting program.

Ad Hoc Committee members further discussed the feedback from dental assisting programs regarding reasons for discontinuance/closure and other reasons that may exist for discontinuance/closure, noting that CODA recently revised Dental Assisting Standard 3-6 at the Summer 2023 meeting, effective immediately, to address the difficulty in hiring faculty who possess a baccalaureate degree.

The revised Standard 3-6, effective August 2023 states: “Faculty providing didactic instruction must have earned at least a baccalaureate degree within three years of the date of initial hire as a didactic faculty”.

The Ad Hoc Committee also believed that low enrollment in CODA-accredited dental assisting programs has led to institutions deciding to discontinue these programs due to operating costs. Additionally, dental assisting students may transition into dental hygiene programs due to the desire for a greater income. Further, students may seek short-term, non-CODA-accredited dental assisting programs, including apprenticeship programs allowing on the job training, since many

states do not require graduation from a CODA-accredited dental assisting program to practice as a dental assistant. The Ad Hoc Committee also discussed whether the cost of dental assisting education may hinder enrollment, given that wages for dental assistants upon graduation may not support the cost of education in states where graduation from a CODA-accredited program is not required for practice.

Through discussion, the Ad Hoc Committee questioned whether dental assisting education programs (both CODA-accredited and non-CODA-accredited) are declining nationwide, or if programs are shifting from CODA-accredited to unaccredited options. The Ad Hoc Committee believed that the decline in a dental assisting workforce may have several negative implications for the dental profession which warrant study, especially since many states do not require graduation from a CODA-accredited program. The Ad Hoc Committee was informed that the American Dental Association's Council on Dental Education and Licensure (CDEL) was directed at the 2023 ADA House of Delegates (Resolution 408H) to use CODA's recent report on faculty to student ratios in the Accreditation Standards (Summer 2023 CODA Meeting) to suggest programs to attract students into allied dental education programs and careers. The Ad Hoc Committee believed that other national organizations, such as the American Dental Association (ADA), American Dental Assistants Association (ADAA), Dental Assisting National Board (DANB), state dental boards, and state dental associations should further review the decline in the allied dental workforce.

The Ad Hoc Committee further discussed the possibility of permitting enrollment of high school students in the post-secondary dental education program, as a means by which students may shorten their educational track and obtain an education to enter the workforce upon graduation from high school. Currently, the Accreditation Standards require "a high-school diploma or its equivalent, or post-secondary degree" for admission into a CODA-accredited dental assisting program. Further, the Committee noted that in several states, one has to be a certain age to expose radiographs or earn other certifications to practice as a dental assistant. The Ad Hoc Committee believed that reviewing the Standards on admissions may be one solution to this issue, in order to expand the scope of students eligible to enter dental assisting programs much like a student may take Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high school for college credit. Another solution may be reviewing the required program length of dental assisting programs; however, it was noted that careful consideration of several factors would be required for this type of change.

The Ad Hoc Committee also noted that many dental assisting programs not accredited by CODA vary regarding the length and content of instruction. Additionally, programs may provide less instruction than that required by the CODA Accreditation Standards, depending on the state-specific educational requirements for licensure and practice. There are many pathways beyond graduation from a CODA-accredited program to obtain the Dental Assisting National Board's "Certified Dental Assistant" credential. The Ad Hoc Committee believed that there are two

issues at hand: 1) the decline in the dental assisting workforce, and 2) the decline in CODA-accredited dental assisting programs.

Following lengthy discussion, the Ad Hoc Committee recommended that the Commission obtain additional information from its broad community of interest related to the decline in CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. To further study this issue, the Ad Hoc Committee recommended that the Commission on Dental Accreditation communicate with the CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs, the American Dental Association (ADA), American Dental Assistants Association (ADAA), Dental Assisting National Board (DANB), state dental boards, and state dental associations, to request the following information:

1. the current state of dental assisting education programs (locally and/or nationally, as applicable), including practice requirements, numbers of programs in the state (CODA-accredited and non-CODA-accredited), changes in dental assisting education, and changes in dental assisting practice;
2. the current issues related to CODA-accredited dental assisting program closures (for example, funding/lack of resources, lack of student interest in the profession, lack of interest in attending a formal program, state practice requirements, etc.); and
3. data on enrollment in CODA-accredited dental assisting programs and, if declining, the reasons for the decline including limitations/barriers to full enrollment and data from educational programs and their admissions/career guidance counselors on the reasons why students choose other program options and/or reasons why dental assisting programs are unable to fully enroll.

Following collection and review of the data from CODA's communities of interest, the Commission's Ad Hoc Committee could continue its review of the topic of program closures and discontinuance of dental assisting education programs to formulate strategies that may be used by the Commission in order to reduce the decline in CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. The Ad Hoc Committee noted that a future virtual symposium of CODA's communities of interest, including CODA-accredited dental assisting program representatives/educators, ADA, ADAA, DANB, state dental associations, and state dental boards may provide additional insight into this topic and could be directed by CODA following initial review of the data submitted by these groups. The Ad Hoc Committee believed that any symposium hosted by the Commission must focus on understanding the decline in CODA-accredited dental assisting programs, which is within the Commission's purview.

Additionally, the Ad Hoc Committee noted that the Review Committee on Dental Assisting Education will continue to review the Accreditation Standards for Dental Assisting Education Programs regarding CODA's recent directive that the allied dental education Review Committees consider the CODA report on faculty to student ratios in the Accreditation Standards. Additionally, in Spring 2024, the DA RC will conduct a Study of the Validity and Reliability of the Accreditation Standards for Dental Assisting Education Programs. As a result

of this Ad Hoc Committees work, and these additional matters under review by the DA RC and Commission, further review and revision of the Standards may be warranted.

Finally, following review of this issue, the Commission could develop educational materials for the public and academic institutions to emphasize the value of CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs.

Summary: The Review Committee on Dental Assisting Education and the Commission on Dental Accreditation are requested to consider the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Dental Assisting Program Closure and Discontinuance of Accreditation, including recommendations to obtain additional information from the Commission's communities of interest for further consideration by the Ad Hoc Committee and Commission at the Summer 2024 meetings.

Recommendation:

DENTAL ASSISTING ANNUAL SURVEY INFORMATION

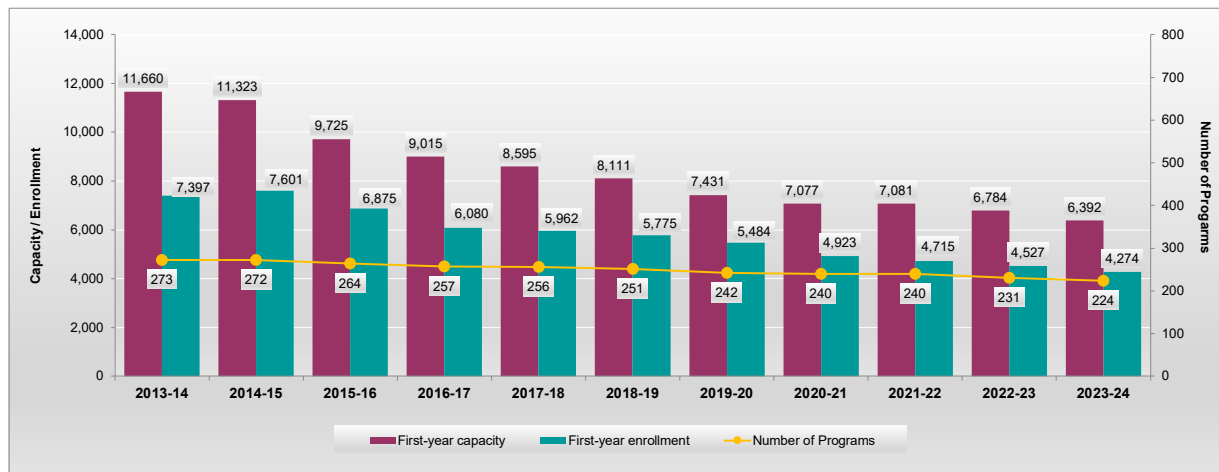
Table 1: First-Year Enrollment in Allied Dental Education Programs, 2013-14 to 2023-24

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Dental Hygiene	8,287	8,472	8,279	8,370	8,265	8,288	8,322	7,745	8,197	8,642	8,967
Percent Change	0.4	2.2	-2.3	1.1	-1.3	0.3	0.4	-6.9	5.8	5.4	3.8
Dental Assisting	7,397	7,601	6,875	6,080	5,962	5,775	5,484	4,923	4,715	4,527	4,274
Percent Change	-9.8	2.8	-9.6	-11.6	-1.9	-3.1	-5.0	-10.2	-4.2	-4.0	-5.6
Dental Laboratory Technology	402	320	303	324	303	319	313	253	263	223	247
Percent Change	-7.6	-20.4	-5.3	6.9	-6.5	5.3	-1.9	-19.2	4.0	-15.2	10.8

Source: American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, *Commission on Dental Accreditation Surveys of Dental Hygiene Education Programs, Surveys of Dental Assisting Education Programs, and Surveys of Dental Laboratory Technology Education Programs.*
©2024 American Dental Association

Figure 1b: First-Year Student Capacity Versus Enrollment by Number of Dental Assisting Programs, 2013-14 to 2023-24



Source: American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, *Commission on Dental Accreditation Surveys of Dental Assisting Education Programs.*
©2024 American Dental Association

Table 2: Comparison of First-Year Student Capacity Versus Enrollment by Educational Setting, 2023-24

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

	University or Four-Year College							
	School of Health Sciences	Dental School	Separate Dental Department	Other Univ. or 4-Year College	Community College	Technical College/ Institute	Vocational School/ Career College	Other
Dental Hygiene								
Institutions	43	24	9	11	182	40	22	4
Capacity	1,454	809	449	264	4,401	1,086	1,228	124
Enrollment	1,354	669	396	245	4,252	989	944	118
Dental Assisting								
Institutions	6	2	1	4	143	52	10	6
Capacity	143	40	48	224	3,721	1,762	303	151
Enrollment	86	25	23	96	2,629	1,190	119	106
Dental Laboratory Technology								
Institutions	-	1	2	-	7	3	-	-
Capacity	-	20	72	-	133	190	-	-
Enrollment	-	0	65	-	61	121	-	-

Source: American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, *Commission on Dental Accreditation 2023-24 Survey of Dental Hygiene Education Programs, 2023-24 Survey of Dental Assisting Education Programs, and 2023-24 Survey of Dental Laboratory Technology Education Programs.*

©2024 American Dental Association

Table 3: Total Enrollment in Allied Dental Education Programs, 2013-14 to 2023-24

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Dental Hygiene	16,162	16,365	16,169	16,214	16,118	16,134	16,178	16,079	15,799	16,416	17,057
Percent Change	-0.6	1.3	-1.2	0.3	-0.6	0.1	0.3	-0.6	-1.7	3.9	3.9
Dental Assisting	8,336	8,416	7,513	6,609	6,400	6,222	5,912	5,331	5,036	4,817	4,645
Percent Change	-8.1	1.0	-10.7	-12.0	-3.2	-2.8	-5.0	-9.8	-5.5	-4.3	-3.6
Dental Laboratory Technology	645	538	508	499	468	465	470	401	397	373	386
Percent Change	-7.6	-16.6	-5.6	-1.8	-6.2	-0.6	1.1	-14.7	-1.0	-6.0	3.5

Source: American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, *Commission on Dental Accreditation Surveys of Dental Hygiene Education Programs, Surveys of Dental Assisting Education Programs, and Surveys of Dental Laboratory Technology Education Programs.*

©2024 American Dental Association

Table 4: Graduates of Allied Dental Education Programs, 2013 to 2023

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Dental Hygiene	7,277	7,298	7,323	7,385	7,294	7,377	7,311	7,002	7,325	6,857	7,132
Percent Change	2.5	0.3	0.3	0.8	-1.2	1.1	-0.9	-4.2	4.6	-6.4	4.0
Dental Assisting	5,773	5,755	5,467	5,242	4,852	4,688	4,517	4,003	3,943	3,720	3,721
Percent Change	-8.8	-0.3	-5.0	-4.1	-7.4	-3.4	-3.6	-11.4	-1.5	-5.7	<0.1
Dental Laboratory Technology	297	311	245	300	225	211	197	188	164	174	193
Percent Change	-1.3	4.7	-21.2	22.4	-25.0	-6.2	-6.6	-4.6	-12.8	6.1	10.9

Source: American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, *Commission on Dental Accreditation Surveys of Dental Hygiene Education Programs, Surveys of Dental Assisting Education Programs, and Surveys of Dental Laboratory Technology Education Programs.*

©2024 American Dental Association

Figure 2: Degrees Awarded at Institutions Providing Allied Dental Education, 2023-24

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

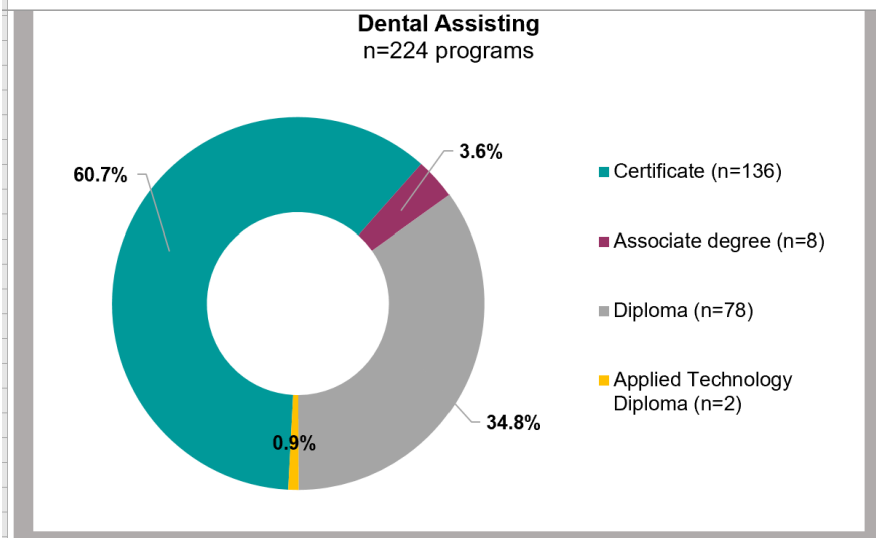
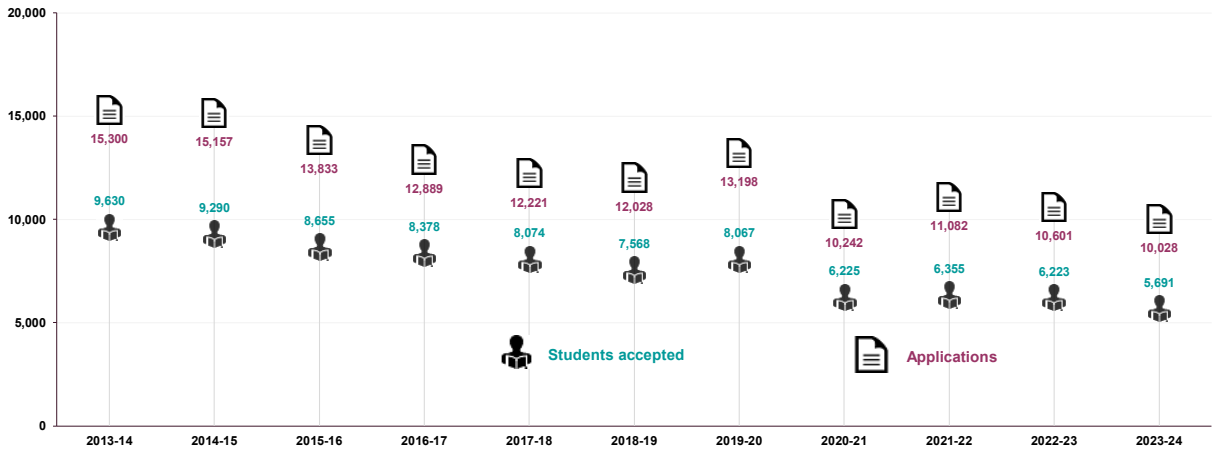
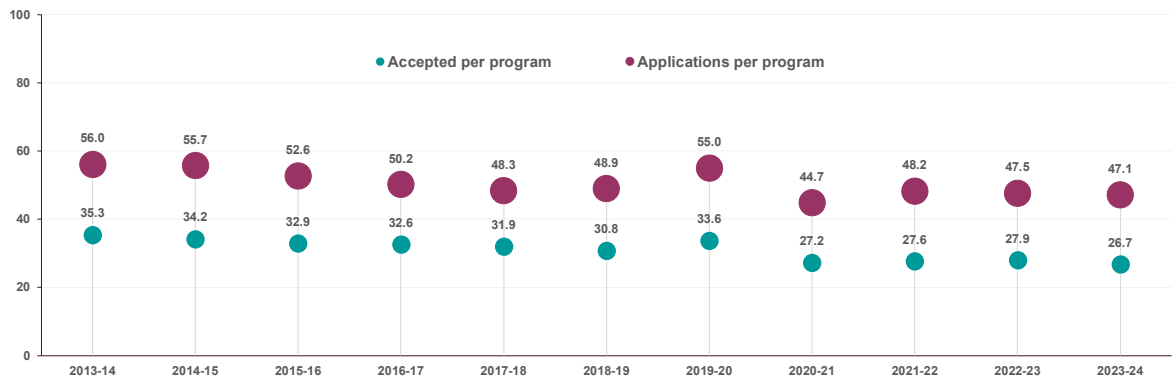


Figure 4a: Number of Applications and Number of Students Accepted into Accredited Dental Assisting Programs, 2013-14 to 2023-24
[Return to Table of Contents](#)



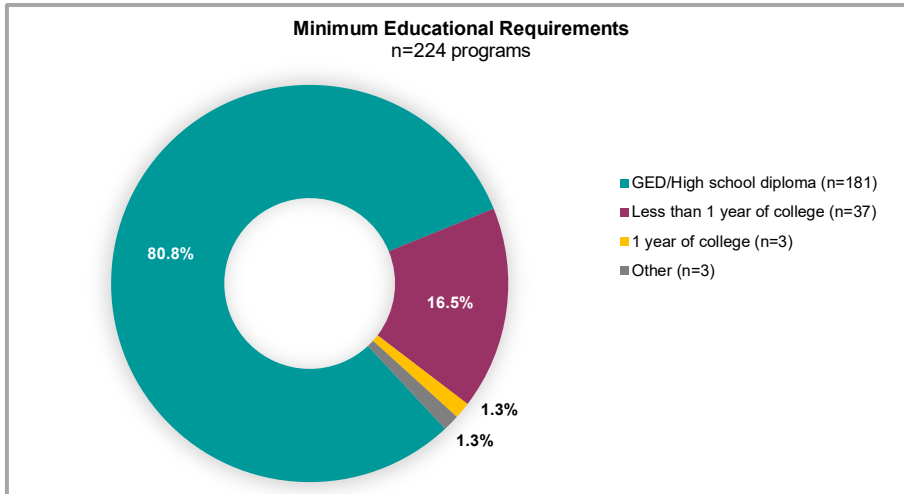
Source: American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, *Commission on Dental Accreditation Surveys of Dental Assisting Education Programs*.
 ©2024 American Dental Association

Figure 4b: Number of Applications per Program and Number of Dental Assisting Students Accepted per Program, 2013-14 to 2023-24



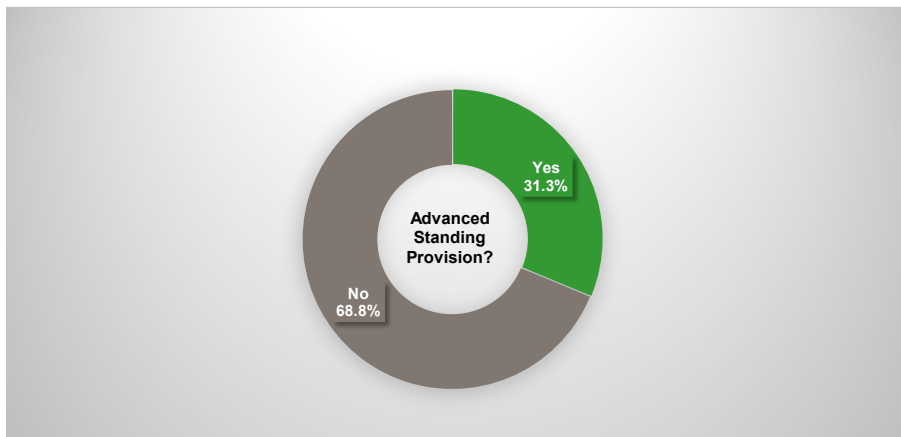
Source: American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, *Commission on Dental Accreditation Surveys of Dental Assisting Education Programs*.

Figure 5: Minimum Educational Requirements Needed to Enroll in Accredited Dental Assisting Programs, 2023-24
[Return to Table of Contents](#)



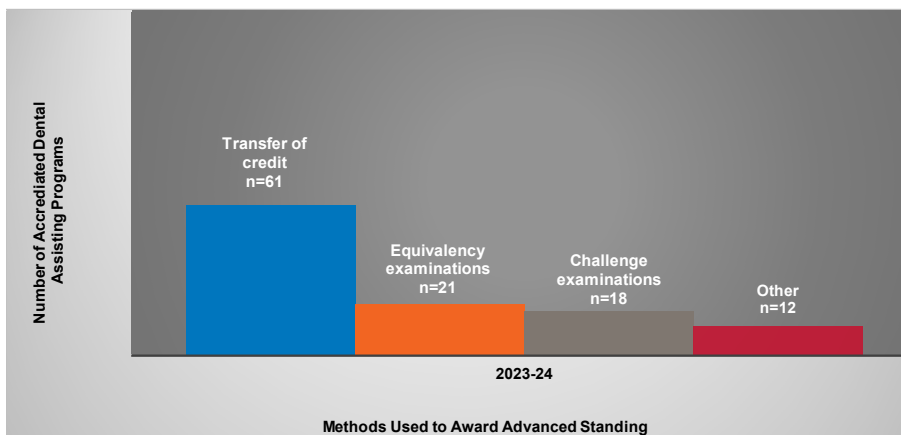
Source: American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, *Commission on Dental Accreditation 2023-24 Survey of Dental Assisting Education Programs*.
 ©2024 American Dental Association

Figure 6a: Percentage of Accredited Dental Assisting Education Programs with Advanced Standing Provision, 2023-24



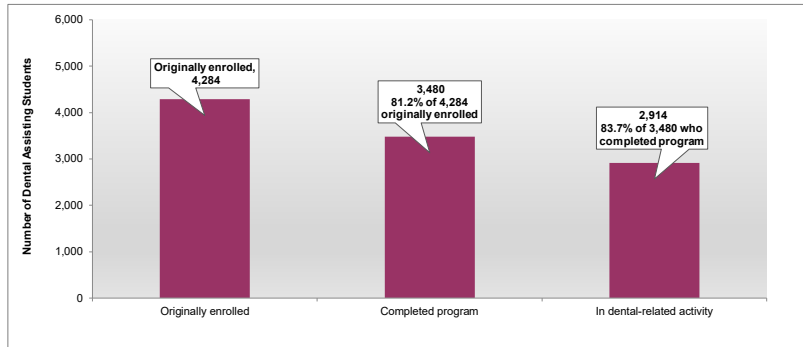
Source: American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, *Commission on Dental Accreditation 2023-24 Survey of Dental Assisting Education Programs*.
 ©2024 American Dental Association

Figure 6b: Methods Used to Award Advanced Standing in Accredited Dental Assisting Education Programs, 2023-24



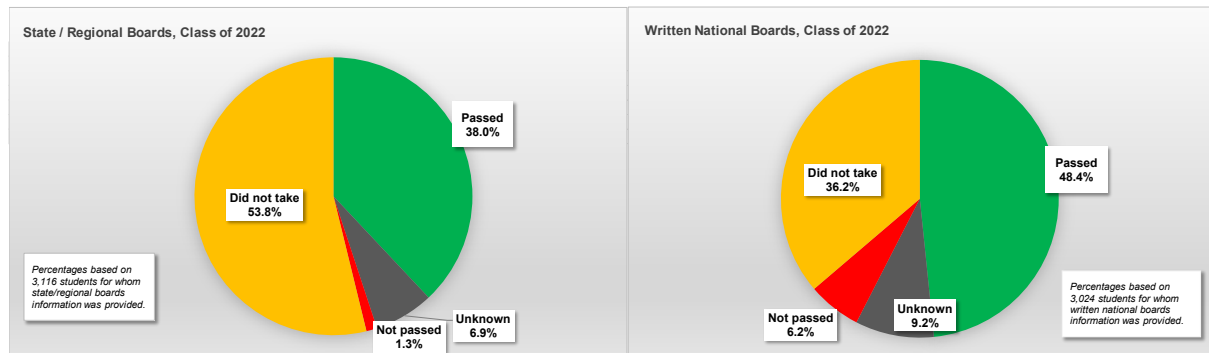
Source: American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, *Commission on Dental Accreditation 2023-24 Survey of Dental Assisting Education Programs*.
 ©2024 American Dental Association

Figure 10a: Outcomes Assessment for Dental Assisting Class of 2022
[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Source: American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, Commission on Dental Accreditation 2022-23 Survey of Dental Assisting Education Programs.
 ©2023 American Dental Association

Figure 10b: Graduate State/National Certification Outcomes, Dental Assisting Class of 2022



Source: American Dental Association, Health Policy Institute, Commission on Dental Accreditation 2023-24 Survey of Dental Assisting Education Programs.
 ©2024 American Dental Association

Via Electronic Mail: najiafaisalq@gmail.com

April 4, 2024

Dr. Najia Usman
Chair, Council on Dental Education and Licensure
American Dental Association
211 East Chicago Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611

Dear Dr. Usman:

At its February 1-2, 2024 meeting, the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) considered the Report of the Review Committee on Dental Assisting Education (DA RC), specifically related to the *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Dental Assisting Program Closure and Discontinuance of Accreditation*. The Commission considered the decline in CODA-accredited dental assisting programs due to program closure, program discontinuance, and teach-out. The Commission also considered the Dental Assisting Review Committee recommendations related to this matter, including a recommendation that CODA communicate with the American Dental Association's Council on Dental Education and Licensure (ADA-CDEL) to urge CDEL and the ADA to support and encourage students to attend CODA-accredited dental assisting programs as a pathway to the profession. The Commission recalled that CDEL was recently directed through the 2023 ADA House of Delegates to study the issue of encouraging students into allied dental programs and careers.

As directed by the Commission, CODA is writing to urge the ADA-CDEL to support and encourage students to attend CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs as a pathway to the profession.

As CDEL is aware, CODA's mission is to serve the public and dental professions by developing and implementing accreditation standards that promote and monitor the continuous quality and improvement of dental education programs. The Commission's Accreditation Standards for Dental Assisting Education Programs have been developed for the following reasons: (1) to protect the public, (2) to serve as a guide for dental assisting program development, (3) to serve as a stimulus for the improvement of established programs, (4) to provide criteria for the evaluation of new and established programs, and (5) to protect enrolled students. Additionally, graduation from a CODA-accredited dental assisting program may allow for educational mobility and career laddering of students through articulation agreements with other dental education programs (e.g., between dental assisting education programs and dental hygiene education programs).

The Commission on Dental Accreditation thanks the American Dental Association and its Council on Dental Education and Licensure in advance for their support of CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs through encouraging prospective students to attend CODA-accredited programs as a pathway to the profession.

The Commission looks forward to learning about the initiatives CDEL will propose to the 2024 ADA House of Delegates for encouraging students into allied dental programs and careers. The Commission on Dental Accreditation would be pleased to assist CDEL with this initiative, should the opportunity arise.

If the Commission on Dental Accreditation can be of assistance to you or members of your staff, please contact Dr. Sherin Tookss, senior director, CODA at 312-440-2940 or by email at tookss@ada.org.

Sincerely,



Maxine Feinberg, DDS
Chair, Commission on Dental Accreditation

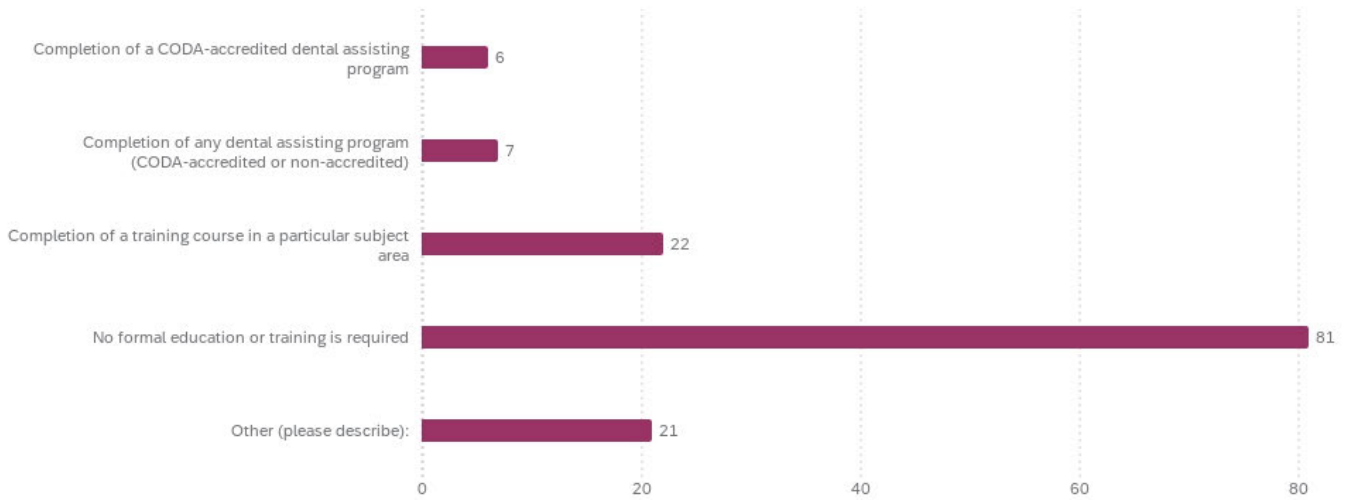
cc: Dr. Jason Tanguay, vice chair, Council on Dental Education and Licensure, ADA,
drtanguay@refreshingdentistry.com
Dr. Raymond Cohlma, executive director, ADA
Dr. Anthony J. Ziebert, senior vice-president, Education and Professional Affairs, ADA
Dr. Meaghan Strotman, director, Council on Dental Education Licensure, ADA
Dr. Frank Licari, vice chair, CODA
Dr. Sherin Tookss, senior director, CODA & US Department of Education Compliance
Ms. Jamie Asher Hernandez, manager, Allied Dental Education, CODA

CODA DA Program Closure Survey - DA Programs

Survey distributed to 227 programs – 137 (60%) responded

What is the minimum educational and/or training requirement to practice as an entry-level dental assistant in your state? (Select one)

137 ⓘ



What is the minimum educational and/or training requirement to practice as an entry-level dental assistant in your state? (Select one)

137 ⓘ

Q1 - What is the minimum educational and/or training requirement to practice as an entry-level dental assistant in your state? (Select one) - Selected Choice

Percentage

Count

Requirement	Percentage	Count
Completion of a CODA-accredited dental assisting program	4%	6
Completion of any dental assisting program (CODA-accredited or non-accredited)	5%	7
Completion of a training course in a particular subject area	16%	22
No formal education or training is required	59%	81
Other (please describe):	15%	21

What is the minimum educational and/or training requirement to practice as an entry-level dental assistant in your state? (Select one):

Other (please describe): 21 ⓘ

Other (please describe):

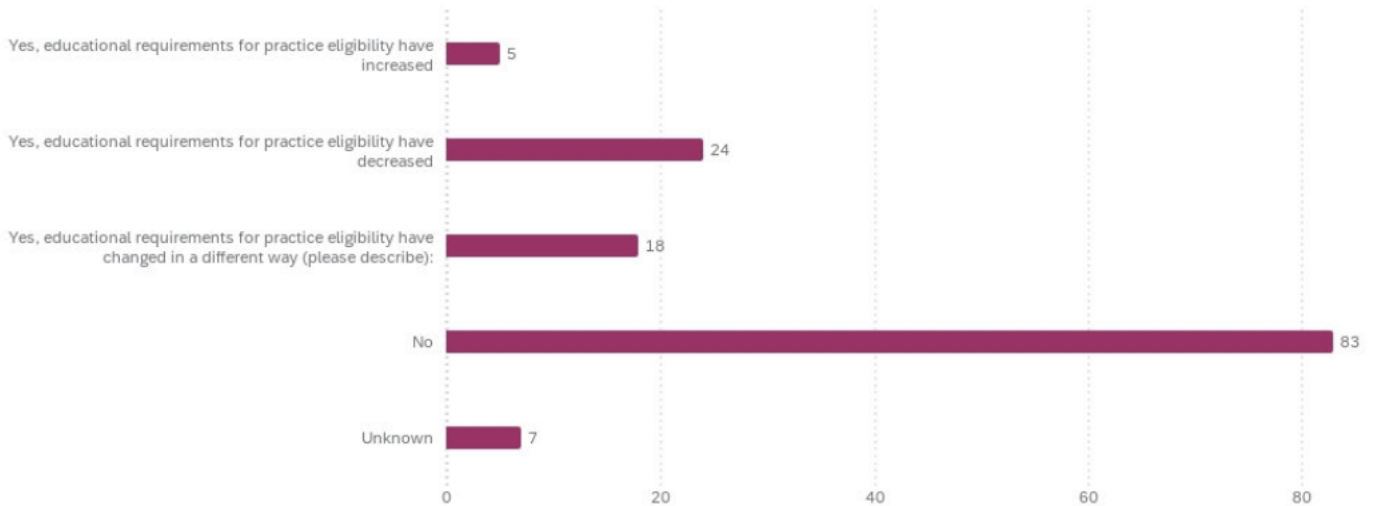
The minimum educational and training requirement is to take and pass two exams created by the [redacted] Dental Association. The two tests and modules that have to be completed are RHS radiation health and science and ICE exam Infection control. If an individual passes these exams that are in lieu of the DANB exams, they can obtain a position in a dental practice. The rigor of these exams are much lower than the DANB exams.

Formal education to work as a DA do not exist in my state. However, there are state requirements to obtain radiology licensure for DAs, and state required education for coronal polishing, fluoride application, and nitrous oxide administration.

Training for Expanded functions only

This is currently under review in my state and may change to more formal education if it does not create a barrier to employment. I will be proposing a Dental Assistant Trainee position in my state.

Have educational requirements related to practice eligibility changed in the last 10 years in your state? (Select one) 137 ⓘ



Have educational requirements related to practice eligibility changed in the last 10 years in your state? (Select one) 137 ⓘ

Q2 - Have educational requirements related to practice eligibility changed in the last 10 years in your state? (Select one) - Selected Choice	Percentage	Count
Yes, educational requirements for practice eligibility have increased	4%	5
Yes, educational requirements for practice eligibility have decreased	18%	24
Yes, educational requirements for practice eligibility have changed in a different way (please describe):	13%	18
No	61%	83
Unknown	5%	7

Have educational requirements related to practice eligibility changed in the last 10 years in your state? (Select one) Yes, educational requirements for practice eligibility have changed in a di... 18 ⓘ

Yes, educational requirements for practice eligibility have changed in a di...

A mandatory Infection Control and Dental Practice Act courses have been added when the DA is on the job trained.

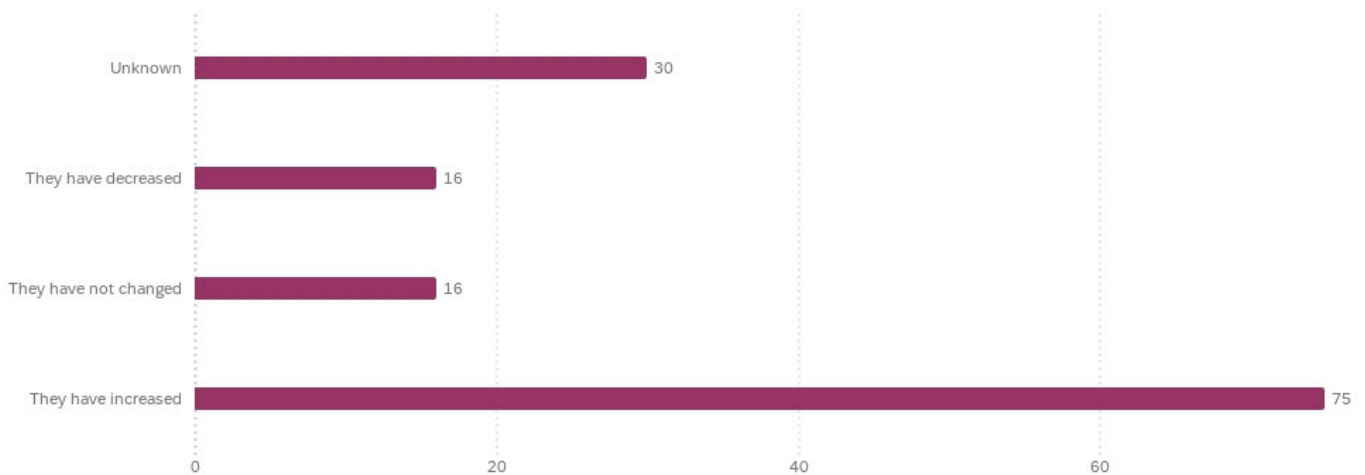
Only for expanded functions

Now allowing education from other states to be reviewed by the board

Levels: DA, CDA, LDA, EFDA

Dentist are needing assistants in the office and are hiring individuals to work and give them hands on training instead of the classroom training

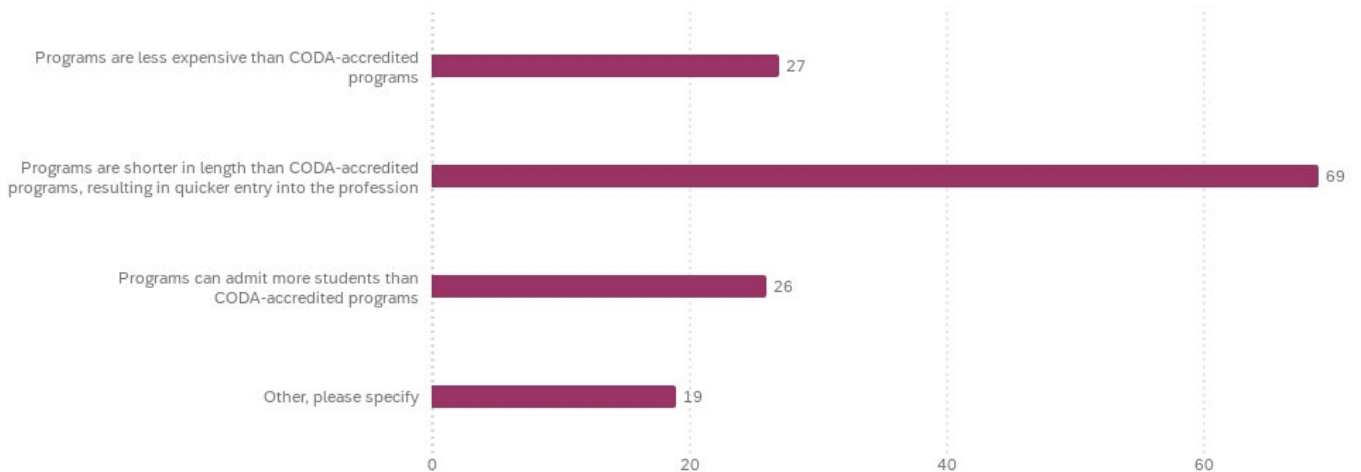
In the past 10 years, how has the number of non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs changed in your state? (Select one) 137 ⓘ



In the past 10 years, how has the number of non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs changed in your state? (Select one) 137 ⓘ

Q3a - In the past 10 years, how has the number of non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs changed in your state? (Select one)	Percentage	Count
They have increased	55%	75
They have not changed	12%	16
They have decreased	12%	16
Unknown	22%	30

In your opinion, please identify all factors leading to the increase in non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. (Select all that apply.) 75 ⓘ



In your opinion, please identify all factors leading to the increase in non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. (Select all that apply.) 75 ⓘ

Q3b - In your opinion, please identify all factors leading to the increase in non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. (Select all that apply.) - Selected Choice

	Percentage	Count
Programs are less expensive than CODA-accredited programs	36%	27
Programs are shorter in length than CODA-accredited programs, resulting in quicker entry into the profession	92%	69
Programs can admit more students than CODA-accredited programs	35%	26
Other, please specify	25%	19

In your opinion, please identify all factors leading to the increase in non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. (Select all that apply.): Other, please specify 19 ⓘ

Other, please specify

Programs advertise more than CODA programs, and often start multiple cohorts per year.

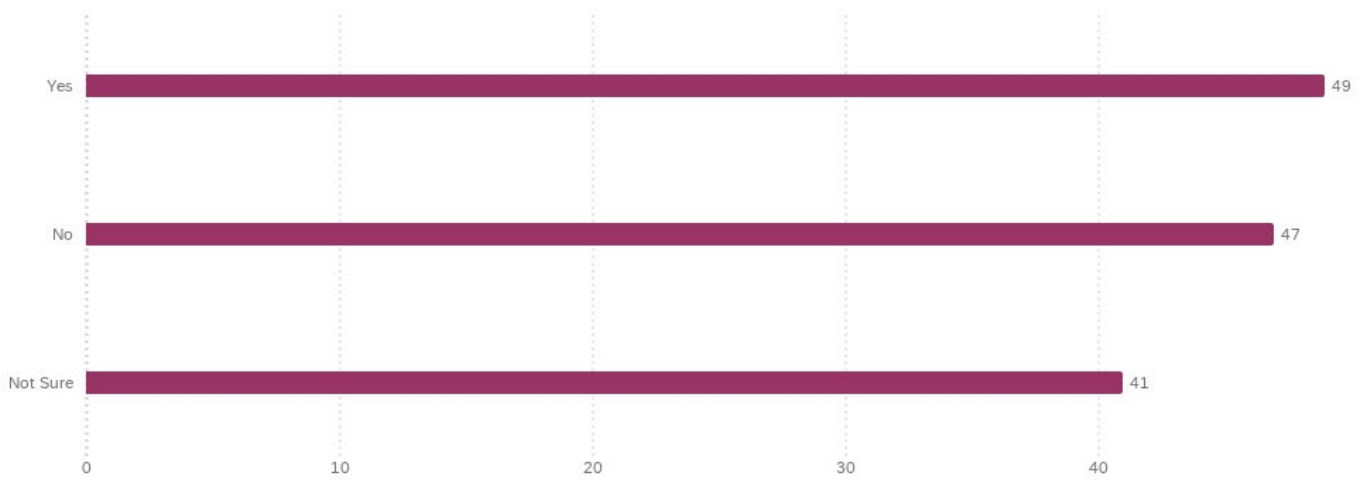
Shortage has increased on the job training

Students don't know what they don't know and get less education for more money. Dentists in our area prefer our graduates and interns. We are considering going to a two semester versus 2 semester and summer session.

DANB certification not required for educators

No pre-requisites. No requirements for faculty to have higher education. No mandated curriculum. Flexibility of scheduling. Better marketing because they

To the best of your knowledge, have any CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs closed in your state in the last 10 years? (Select one) 137 ⓘ

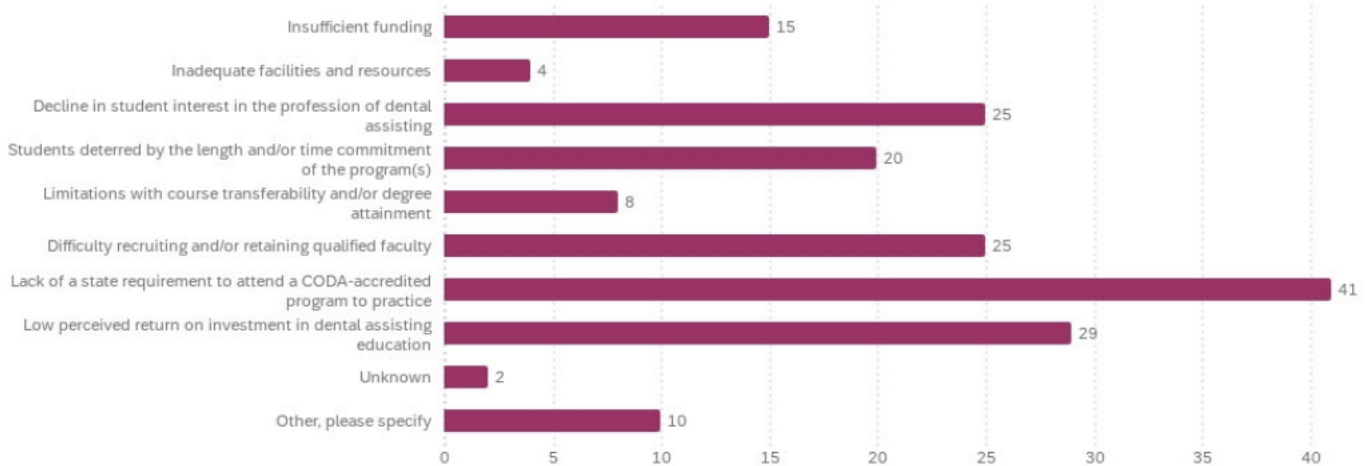


To the best of your knowledge, have any CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs closed in your state in the last 10 years? (Select one) 137 ⓘ

Q4a - To the best of your knowledge, have any CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs closed in your state in the last 10 years? (Select one)

	Percentage	Count
Yes	36%	49
No	34%	47
Not Sure	30%	41

To the best of your knowledge, please identify any challenges faced by current or recently-closed CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state. (Select all that apply.) 49 ⓘ



To the best of your knowledge, please identify any challenges faced by current or recently-closed CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state. (Select all that apply.)

Q4b - To the best of your knowledge, please identify any challenges faced by current or recently-closed CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state. (Select all that apply.) Selected Choice.	%	Count
Insufficient funding	8.38%	15
Inadequate facilities and resources	2.23%	4
Decline in student interest in the profession of dental assisting	13.97%	25
Students deterred by the length and/or time commitment of the program(s)	11.17%	20
Limitations with course transferability and/or degree attainment	4.47%	8
Difficulty recruiting and/or retaining qualified faculty	13.97%	25
Lack of a state requirement to attend a CODA-accredited program to practice	22.91%	41
Low perceived return on investment in dental assisting education	16.20%	29
Unknown	1.12%	2
Other, please specify	5.59%	10

To the best of your knowledge, please identify any challenges faced by current or recently-closed CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state. (Select all that apply.): Other, please specify 10 ⓘ

Other, please specify

Dental Assistants' earning potential is too low in my state. Graduates have a difficult time making a living post graduation even though the tuition for our program is very low and students do not typically have any loan repayments.

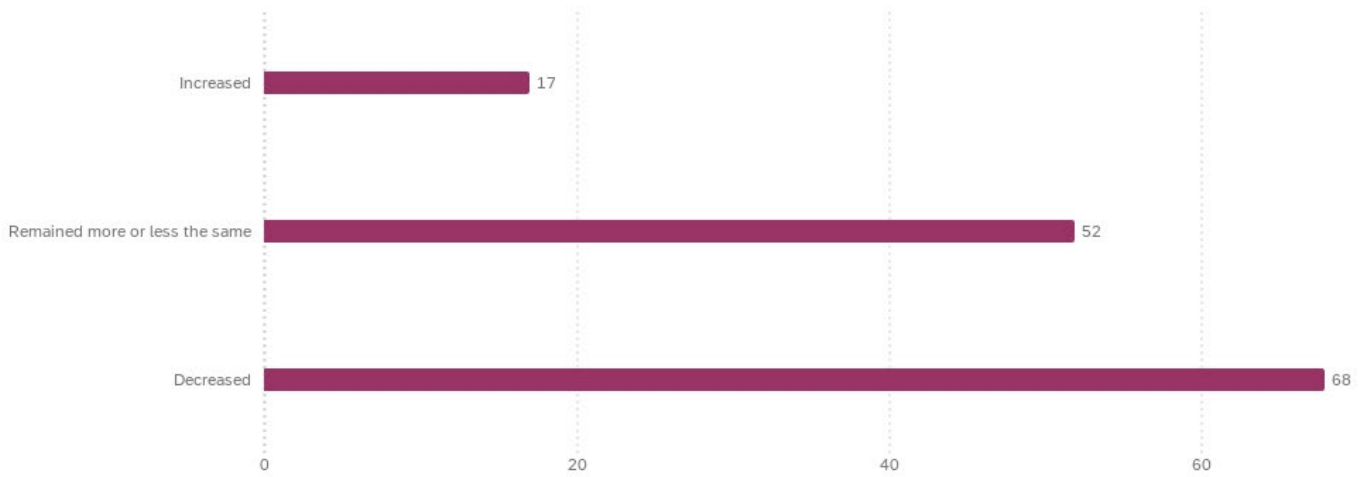
Too lengthy for community dental offices in need of dental assistants

Low wages of dental assistants

Low salary of DAs

There was one program in [redacted] that closed in the last 10 years. To my knowledge, it was related to lack of administrative support to recruit students to their

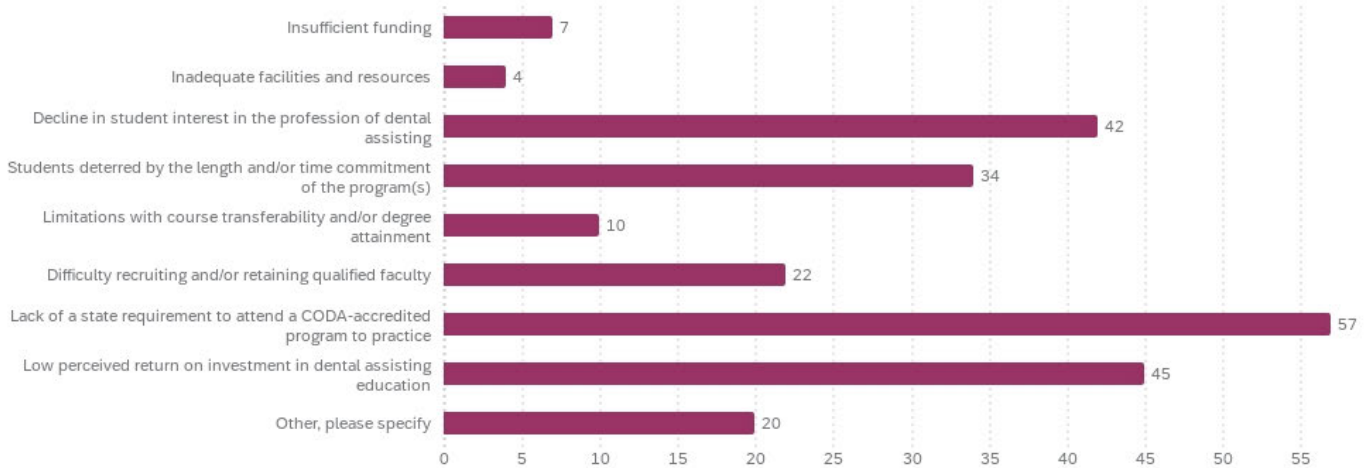
Which of the following best describes your CODA-accredited dental assisting program's enrollment trends in the last 10 years. (Select one) 137 ⓘ



Which of the following best describes your CODA-accredited dental assisting program's enrollment trends in the last 10 years. (Select one) 137 ⓘ

Q5a - Which of the following best describes your CODA-accredited dental assisting program's enrollment trends in the last 10 years. (Select one)	Percentage	Count
Increased	12%	17
Remained more or less the same	38%	52
Decreased	50%	68

Related to your CODA-accredited dental assisting education program, please identify all factors that you believe have contributed to declining enrollment in the last 10 years. (Select all that apply.) 68 ⓘ



Related to your CODA-accredited dental assisting education program, please identify all factors that you believe have contributed to declining enrollment in the last 10 years. (Select all that apply.)

Q5b - Related to your CODA-accredited dental assisting education program, please identify all factors that you believe have contributed to declining enrollment in the last 10 years. (Select all that apply.) Selected Choice.	%	Count
Insufficient funding	2.90%	7
Inadequate facilities and resources	1.66%	4
Decline in student interest in the profession of dental assisting	17.43%	42
Students deterred by the length and/or time commitment of the program(s)	14.11%	34
Limitations with course transferability and/or degree attainment	4.15%	10
Difficulty recruiting and/or retaining qualified faculty	9.13%	22
Lack of a state requirement to attend a CODA-accredited program to practice	23.65%	57
Low perceived return on investment in dental assisting education	18.67%	45
Other, please specify	8.30%	20

Related to your CODA-accredited dental assisting education program, please identify all factors that you believe have contributed to declining enrollment in the last 10 years. (Select all that apply.): Other, please specify 20 ⓘ

Other, please specify

Lack of resources for student recruitment and advertising

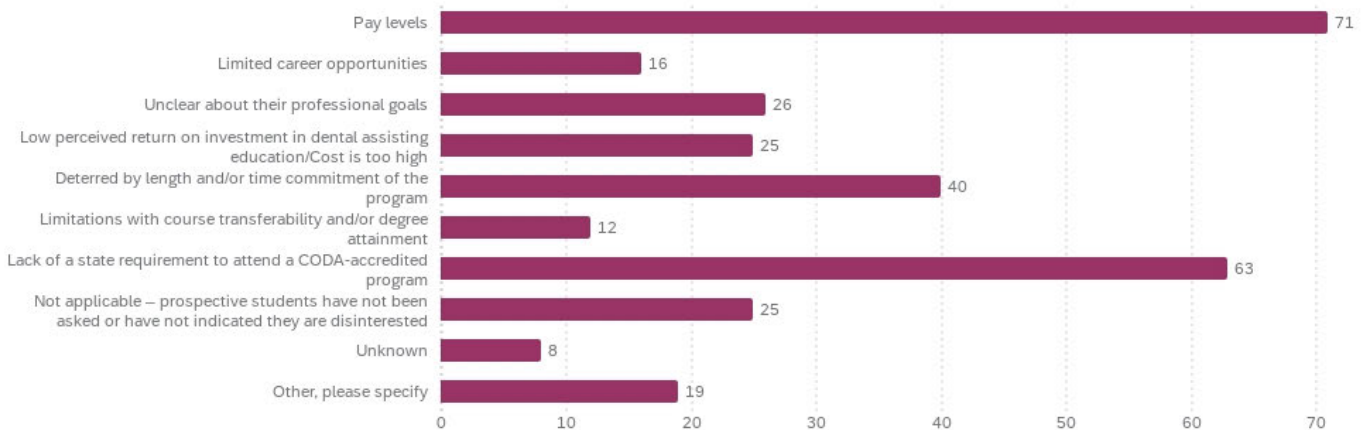
pay for profession and investment in an education that is not needed. If DAs were regulated in any way, it would be easier. Also promotion to public about DAs and EFDA professions

Low salary

Lack of availability in affordable housing for students in our area.

Students are directed to attend other programs i.e. dental hygiene, nursing, respiratory therapy etc.

Related to your CODA-accredited dental assisting education program, please identify the reasons given by your admissions/career guidance counselors why prospective students have indicated they are not interested in attending a dental assisting education program. (Select all that apply.) 137 ⓘ



Related to your CODA-accredited dental assisting education program, please identify the reasons given by your admissions/career guidance counselors why prospective students have indicated they are not interested in attending a dental assisting education program. (Select all that apply.)

Q6 - Related to your CODA-accredited dental assisting education program, please identify the reasons given by your admissions/career guidance counselors why prospective students have indicated they are not interested in attending a dental assisting education program. (Select all that apply.) Selected Choice.	%	Count
Pay levels	23.28%	71
Limited career opportunities	5.25%	16
Unclear about their professional goals	8.52%	26
Low perceived return on investment in dental assisting education/Cost is too high	8.20%	25
Deterred by length and/or time commitment of the program	13.11%	40
Limitations with course transferability and/or degree attainment	3.93%	12
Lack of a state requirement to attend a CODA-accredited program	20.66%	63
Not applicable – prospective students have not been asked or have not indicated they are disinterested	8.20%	25
Unknown	2.62%	8
Other, please specify	6.23%	19

Related to your CODA-accredited dental assisting education program, please identify the reasons given by your admissions/career guidance counselors why prospective students have indicated they are not interested in attending a dental assisting education program. (Select all that apply.): Other, please specify ⓘ

Other, please specify

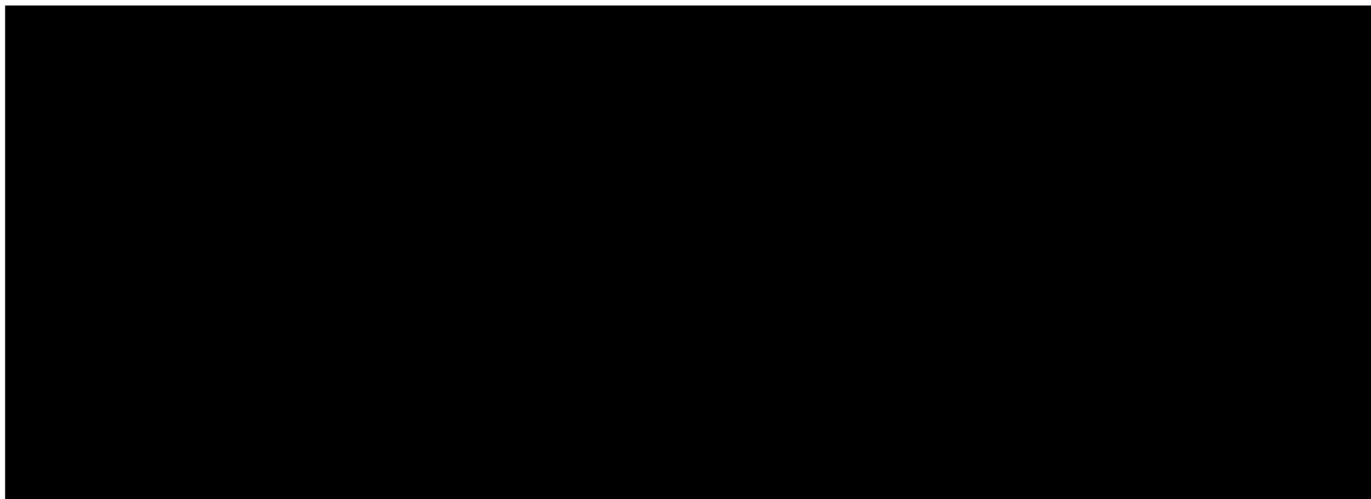
Low earning potential post graduation compared to other allied professions.

The pay was a major deterrent for my students and I have worked hard within the dental community to raise the salaries of qualified DANB Certified dental assistants. Several dentists appreciated the training of our students and salaries increased. Several dentists are now relying on the CSDA's testing and certifications. The outcomes are low increase in salary for their employees.

They think dentistry is gross

only come in wanting DH because that is what is on top 10 careers making good salary with only 2 years of education

State 137 ⓘ

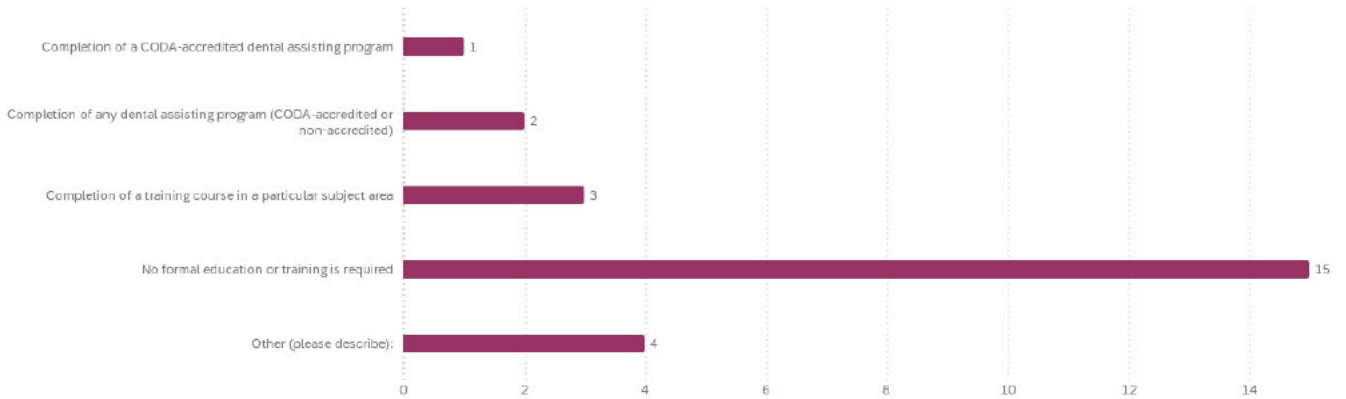


AK AL AR AZ CA CO CT FL GA HI IA ID IL IN KS KY MA MI MN MO MS MT NC ND NE NH NJ NM NV OH OK OR PA RI SC SD TX VA VT WA WI

CODA DA Program Closure Survey - State Board & State Associations

Survey distributed to 107 state boards and associations – 25 (23%) responded

What is the minimum educational and/or training requirement to practice as an entry-level dental assistant in your state? (Select one) 25



What is the minimum educational and/or training requirement to practice as an entry-level dental assistant in your state? (Select one) 25

Q1 - What is the minimum educational and/or training requirement to practice as an entry-level dental assistant in your state? (Select one) - Selected Choice	Percentage	Count
Completion of a CODA-accredited dental assisting program	4%	1
Completion of any dental assisting program (CODA-accredited or non-accredited)	8%	2
Completion of a training course in a particular subject area	12%	3
No formal education or training is required	60%	15
Other (please describe):	16%	4

What is the minimum educational and/or training requirement to practice as an entry-level dental assistant in your state? (Select one): Other (please describe): 4

Other (please describe):

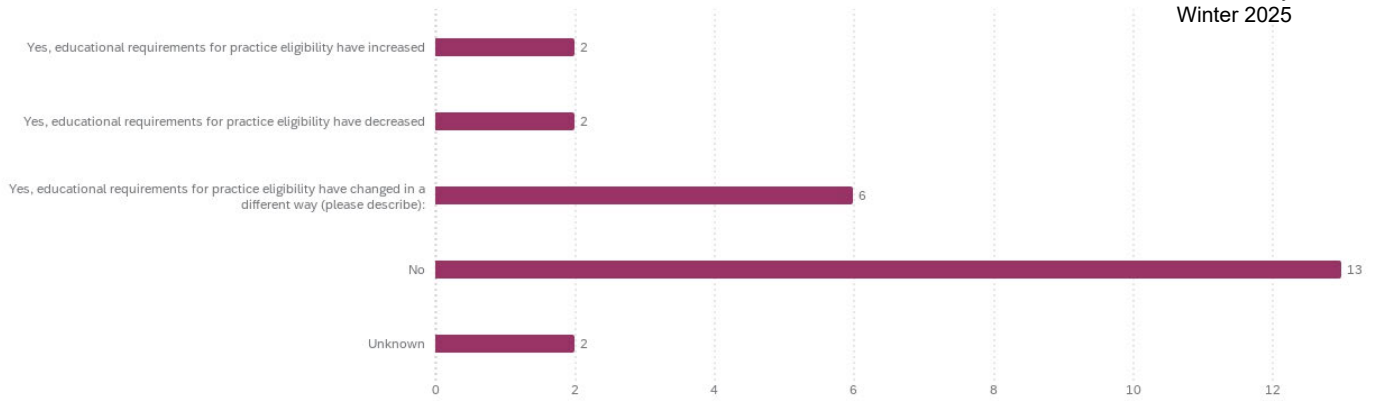
There are two types of Assistants. DAI would be "completion of a training course..." DAIII have three combos of requirements including one with CODA- accredited dental assisting program and CPR certification.

none until expanded functions

See [Redacted]

No formal education or training is required, unless the DA is performing coronal polishing and radiography, then they need certification through DANB.

Have educational requirements related to practice eligibility for dental assistants changed in the last 10 years in your state? (Select one) 25



Have educational requirements related to practice eligibility for dental assistants changed in the last 10 years in your state? (Select one) 25

Q2 - Have educational requirements related to practice eligibility for dental assistants changed in the last 10 years in your state? (Select one) - Selected Choice	Percentage	Count
Yes, educational requirements for practice eligibility have increased	8%	2
Yes, educational requirements for practice eligibility have decreased	8%	2
Yes, educational requirements for practice eligibility have changed in a different way (please describe):	24%	6
No	52%	13
Unknown	8%	2

Have educational requirements related to practice eligibility for dental assistants changed in the last 10 years in your state? (Select one): Yes, educational requirements for practice eligibility have changed in a di... 5

Yes, educational requirements for practice eligibility have changed in a di...

expanding function training courses

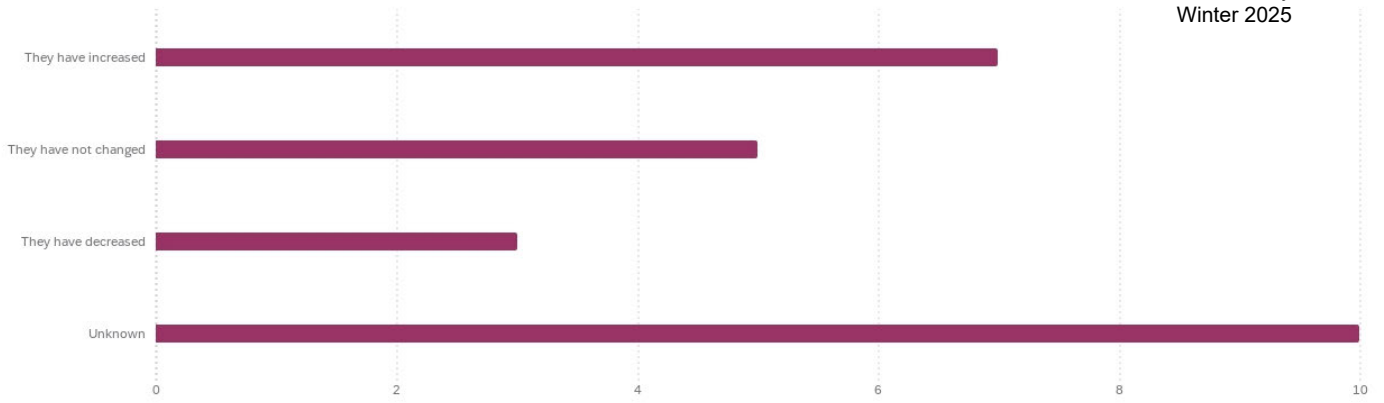
Educational requirements/pathways for DAI's have been established.

Overall, not significantly but additional pathways to certification.

the legislature has forced boards to lower the hours required for training to make licensing easier

have added expanded functions and coronal polishing by DANB exam

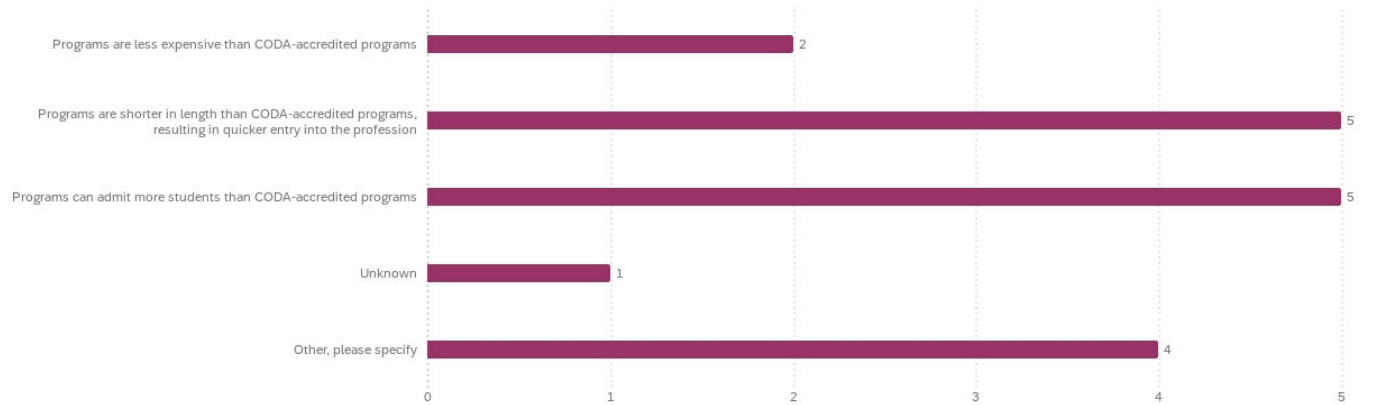
In the past 10 years, how has the number of non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs changed in your state? (Select one) 25



In the past 10 years, how has the number of non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs changed in your state? (Select one) 25

Q3a - In the past 10 years, how has the number of non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs changed in your state? (Select one)	Percentage	Count
They have increased	28%	7
They have not changed	20%	5
They have decreased	12%	3
Unknown	40%	10

In your opinion, please identify all factors leading to the increase in non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. (Select all that apply.) 7



In your opinion, please identify all factors leading to the increase in non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. (Select all that apply.)

Q3b - In your opinion, please identify all factors leading to the increase in non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. (Select all that apply.) - Selected Choice	Percentage	Count
Programs are less expensive than CODA-accredited programs	29%	2
Programs are shorter in length than CODA-accredited programs, resulting in quicker entry into the profession	71%	5
Programs can admit more students than CODA-accredited programs	71%	5
Unknown	14%	1
Other, please specify	57%	4

In your opinion, please identify all factors leading to the increase in non-CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs. (Select all that apply.): Other, please specify

4 ⓘ

Other, please specify

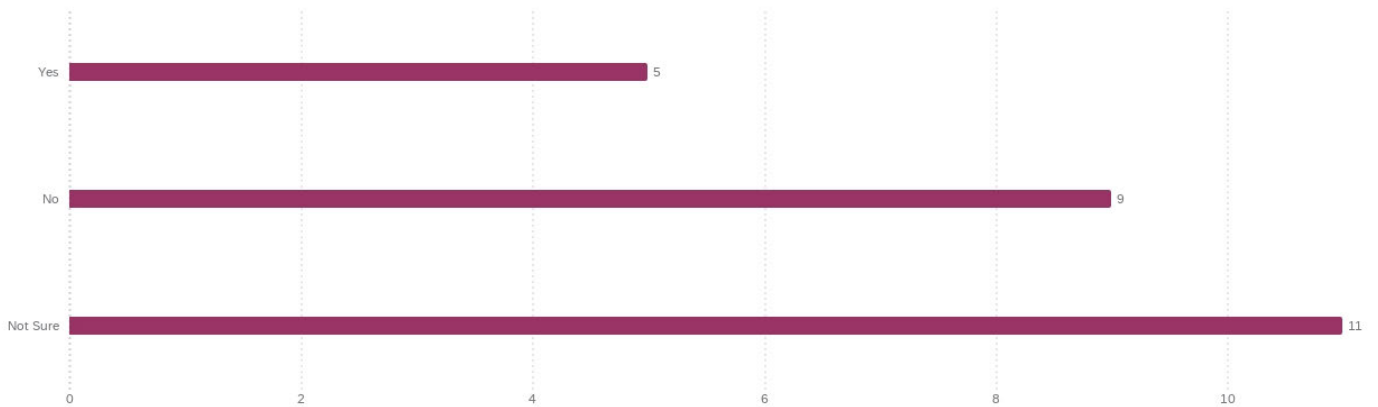
They allow more flexibility and can be tailored to the needs of dental offices

CODA programs have more pre-requisites

Convenience of weekend, evening, programs versus traditional CODA type programs

Dentists can train their DA's via our dental organization's training program

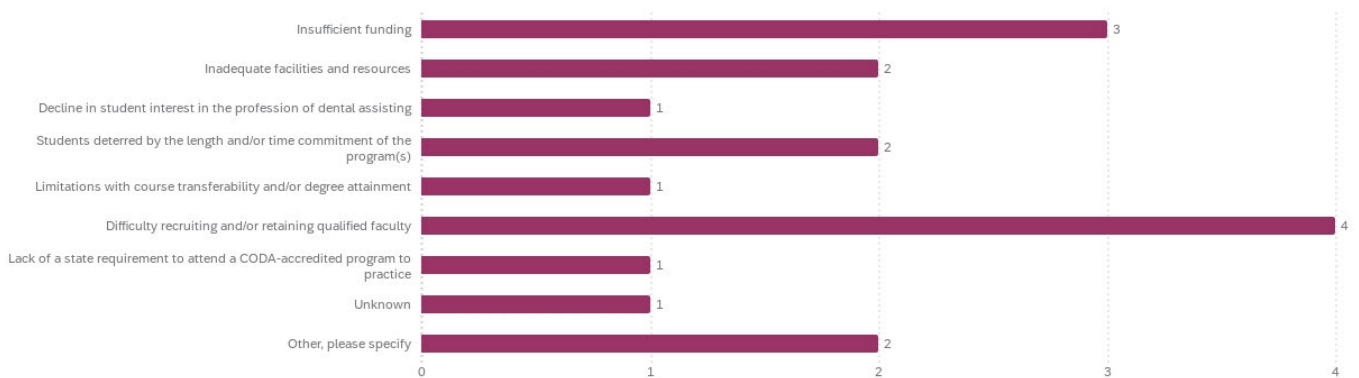
To the best of your knowledge, have any CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs closed in your state in the last 10 years? (Select one) 25 ⓘ



To the best of your knowledge, have any CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs closed in your state in the last 10 years? (Select one)

Q4a - To the best of your knowledge, have any CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs closed in your state in the last 10 years? (Select one)	Percentage	Count
Yes	20%	5
No	36%	9
Not Sure	44%	11

To the best of your knowledge, please identify any challenges faced by current or recently-closed CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state. (Select all that apply.) 5 ①



To the best of your knowledge, please identify any challenges faced by current or recently-closed CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state. (Select all that apply.)

Q4b - To the best of your knowledge, please identify any challenges faced by current or recently-closed CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state. (Select all that apply.) Selected Choice.	%	Count
Insufficient funding	16.67%	3
Inadequate facilities and resources	11.11%	2
Decline in student interest in the profession of dental assisting	5.56%	1
Students deterred by the length and/or time commitment of the program(s)	11.11%	2
Limitations with course transferability and/or degree attainment	5.56%	1
Difficulty recruiting and/or retaining qualified faculty	22.22%	4
Lack of a state requirement to attend a CODA-accredited program to practice	5.56%	1
Low perceived return on investment in dental assisting education	0.00%	0
Unknown	11.11%	2
Other, please specify	11.11%	2

Ad Hoc Dental Assisting Program Closure
and Discontinuance of Accreditation

Commission Only

Winter 2025

To the best of your knowledge, please identify any challenges faced by current or recently-closed CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state. (Select all that apply.): Other, please specify 2 ⓘ

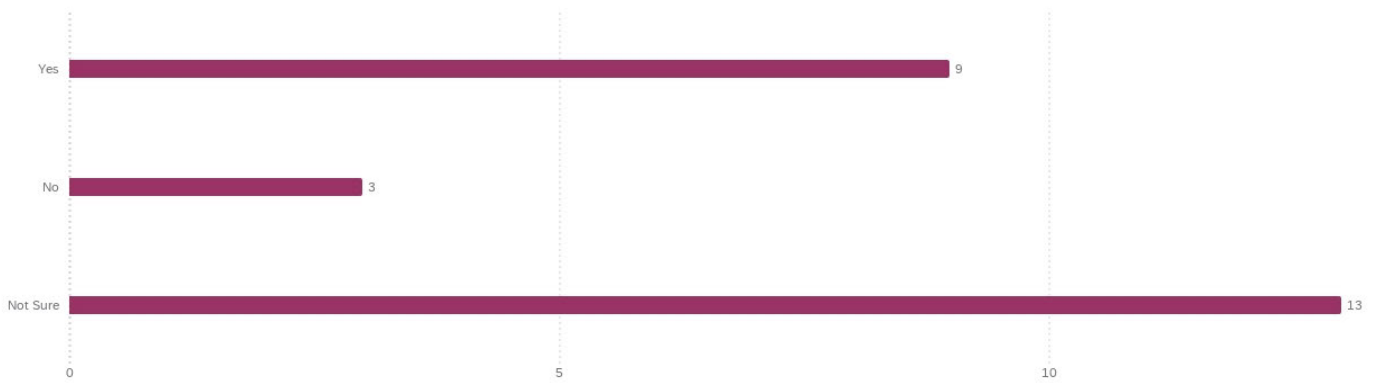
Other, please specify

Justifying the rigid and what appear in some cases arbitrary CODA regulations to school administrators

the increased requirements of CODA and costs have driven two programs out for dental assisting, teacher to student ratios and criteria the schools cannot afford to meet.

To the best of your knowledge, have any CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state had declining enrollment in the last 10 years? (Select one)

25 ⓘ

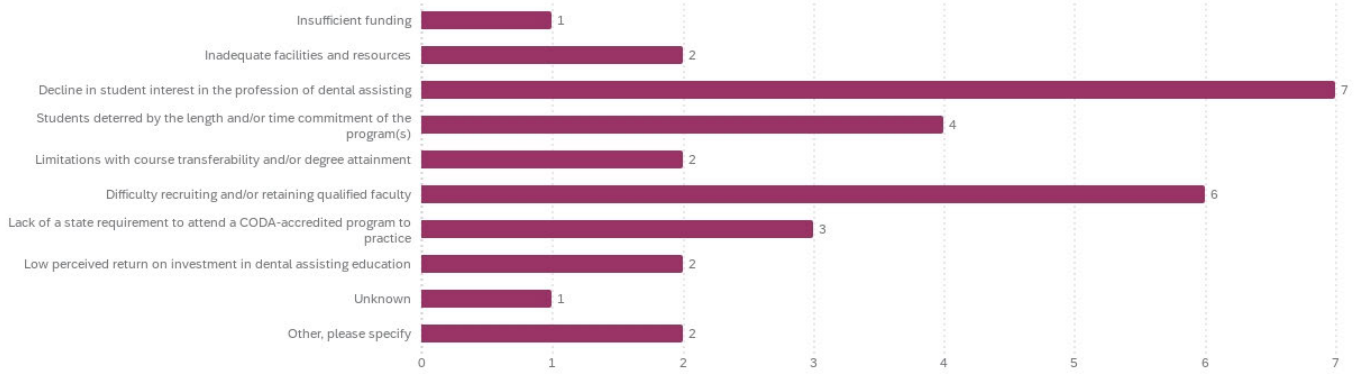


To the best of your knowledge, have any CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state had declining enrollment in the last 10 years? (Select one)

25 ⓘ

Q5a - To the best of your knowledge, have any CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state had declining enrollment in the last 10 years? (Select one)	Percentage	Count
Yes	36%	9
No	12%	3
Not Sure	52%	13

In your opinion, please identify all factors that you believe have contributed to declining enrollment in CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state in the last 10 years. (Select all that apply.) 9



In your opinion, please identify all factors that you believe have contributed to declining enrollment in CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state in the last 10 years. (Select all that apply.)

Q5b - In your opinion, please identify all factors that you believe have contributed to declining enrollment in CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state in the last 10 years. (Select all that apply.) Selected Choice.	%	Count
Insufficient funding	3.33%	1
Inadequate facilities and resources	6.67%	2
Decline in student interest in the profession of dental assisting	23.33%	7
Students deterred by the length and/or time commitment of the program(s)	13.33%	4
Limitations with course transferability and/or degree attainment	6.67%	2
Difficulty recruiting and/or retaining qualified faculty	20.00%	6
Lack of a state requirement to attend a CODA-accredited program to practice	10.00%	3
Low perceived return on investment in dental assisting education	6.67%	2
Unknown	3.33%	1
Other, please specify	6.67%	2

In your opinion, please identify all factors that you believe have contributed to declining enrollment in CODA-accredited dental assisting education programs in your state in the last 10 years. (Select all that apply.): Other, please specify 2

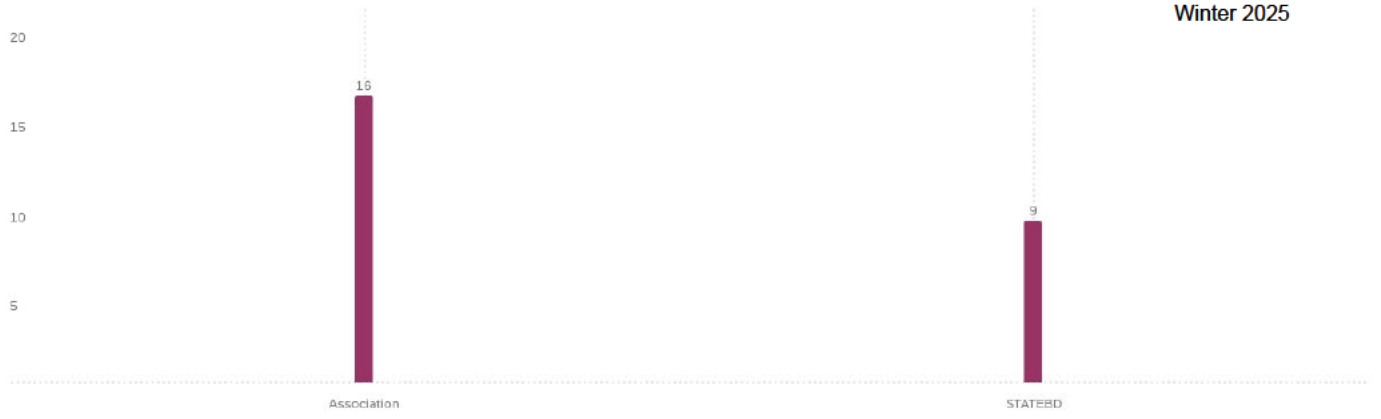
Other, please specify

Smaller applicant pool

Life complications - cost of housing, single parent, etc.

Ad Hoc Dental Assisting Program Closure
and Discontinuance of Accreditation
Commission Only
Winter 2025

Demographic 25



State 25

