

**University of Detroit Mercy School of Dentistry**  
**Competencies for the Graduating Dental Hygienist**  
*(Including Foundation Knowledge and Skills)*

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**Preamble**

Competencies for the University of Detroit Mercy Dental Hygiene Graduate identifies and organizes the knowledge and skills the graduate must acquire to become a competent practitioner in dental hygiene. The document also reflects a curriculum that is patient driven, competency based and criterion referenced.

The dental hygienist is an integral member of the oral health care team collaboratively practicing evidence-based comprehensive dental hygiene care with the ultimate goal of improving the health of society. The dental hygienist must have a foundation in biomedical science and strong clinical skills as well as demonstration of professional and ethical behavior, and effective communication and interpersonal skills. In addition, he/she must have the ability to evaluate and utilize emerging technologies, continuing professional development opportunities and problem-solving and critical thinking skills to effectively address current and future issues in health care.

As used in this document, a competency is a complex behavior or ability essential for the dental hygienist to begin the practice of dental hygiene. Competency includes knowledge, experience, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, professionalism, ethical values, and technical and procedural skills. These components become an integrated whole during the delivery of patient care by the competent dental hygienist. Competency assumes that all behaviors are performed with a degree of quality consistent with patient well-being and that the dental hygienist can self-evaluate treatment effectiveness. In competency-based dental education, what students learn is based upon clearly articulated competencies and further assumes that all behaviors/abilities are supported by foundation knowledge and psychomotor skills in biomedical, behavioral, ethical, clinical dental science and informatics areas that are essential for an entry-level dental hygienist. In creating curricula, faculty members have considered the competencies to be developed through the educational process, the learning experiences that will lead to the development of these competencies, and ways to assess or measure the attainment of competencies.

**Domains:**

- 1. Professionalism**
- 2. Interpersonal Communication Skills to Function Successfully in a Multicultural Work Environment with Diverse Populations**
- 3. Critical Thinking**
- 4. Health Promotion**
- 5. Practice Management and Informatics**
- 6. Patient Care**

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## **1. Professionalism**

### **1.1. Demonstrates personal/professional responsibility to the welfare of society through service activities.**

- Service learning
- Social justice

### **1.2. Practice within the context of ethical and legal standards in the provision of dental hygiene care.**

- Ethical decision making and conflicting obligations
- Legal and regulatory principles and standards
- Practices within the context of professional obligations and jurisdictional Code of Ethics

### **1.3. Participate in professional organizations at the local, state, and/or national level.**

- Organized dental hygiene association activities

### **1.4. Practice within one's scope of competence, and consults with or refers to professional colleagues when indicated.**

- Self-assessment of competence
- Demonstration of responsibility and accountability for actions within the various roles of the dental hygienist
- Standards of care, regulations and policies
- Communication skills, both orally and in writing, with patients, patients' families, colleagues, and others with whom other health care providers must exchange information in carrying out their responsibilities
- Scope of practice of dental hygiene and medical specialties and social support services
- Identification of community resources for referrals
- Personal well being
- Implementation of corrective measures to address personal and professional deficiencies of self

## **2. Interpersonal Communication Skills to Function Successfully in a Multicultural Work Environment with Diverse Populations**

### **2.1 Apply appropriate interpersonal and communication skills with patients, dental and inter-professional health care team members.**

- Communication theory and skills
- Interpersonal (one-on-one) communication principles
- Verbal and nonverbal communication principles
- Conflict resolution
- Reflective listening
- Collaboration with intra/ inter-professional health care team
- Emotional and behavioral development and sensitivity
- Physiological and psychological indications of anxiety and fear
- Addressing patient concerns/issues/problems
- Behavior modification and motivation techniques
- Special needs/diversity of patients
- Health literacy
- Language barriers
- Cognitive barriers

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**2.2 Apply psychosocial and behavioral principles in patient-centered health care.**

- Counseling skills and motivational interviewing principles
- Social and behavioral applied sciences
- Behavior modification
- Fear and anxiety management
- Pain management (acute and chronic pain)
- Geriatrics
- Special patient needs
- Cultural competence

**2.3 Communicate effectively with individuals from diverse populations.**

- Influence of culture on health and illness behaviors
- Influence of culture related to oral health
- Complementary and alternative therapies
- Communication with patients, dental and inter-professional team members in a culturally sensitive manner
- Communication in overcoming language barriers
- Communication with special needs patients
- Communication skills to address diversity-related conflict

**3. Critical Thinking**

**3.1 Evaluate and integrate emerging trends in health care and determines their value in dental hygiene practice.**

- Trends in health care
- Health care policy
- Economic principles of health care delivery
- Health care organization and delivery models
- Quality assessment and quality assurance
- Demographics of the oral health care relationships
- Relationship of systemic health to oral health and disease
- Impact of political and social climate on health care delivery
- Critically evaluates health care literature
- Critically evaluates sales and continuing education presentations

**3.2 Utilize critical thinking and problem-solving skills.**

- Application of scientific method to clinical problem-solving
- Evidence-based delivery of oral health care
- Clinical reasoning skills
- Diagnostic skills
- Treatment planning
- Self-assessment
- Reading comprehension
- Verbal and written communication skills
- Computer literacy
- Utilization of current information systems to access medical/dental databases/information

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**3.3 Evaluate and integrate best research outcomes with clinical expertise and patient values for evidence-based practice.**

- Application of scientific method to clinical problem-solving
- Evidence-based delivery of oral health care
- Critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Cultural competence
- Communication skills, verbal and written
- Reading comprehension
- Ethics
- Statistics literacy
- Computer literacy
- Utilization of current information systems to access medical/dental/databases/information
- Epidemiological methods

**4. Health Promotion**

**4.1 Provide prevention, intervention, and educational strategies.**

- Patient and family communication
- Education of patient and/or family
- Risk assessment
- Prevention strategies (intervention, motivation, nutrition)
- Clinical evaluation
- Utilization of the principles of learning and instruction in patient education

**4.2 Participate with dental team members and other health care professionals in the management and health promotion for all patients.**

- Various practice settings (community settings)
- Organizational behavior of team
- Professional communication
- Collaborative and leadership skills
- Inter-professional education

**4.3 Apply community dental health principles (assess, plan, implement and evaluate programs) to prevent disease and promote health.**

- Cultural competence
- Barriers to improving oral health
- Global health
- Population trends
- National and international health goals

**5. Practice Management and Informatics**

**5.1 Evaluate and apply contemporary and emerging information including clinical and practice management technology resources.**

- Data analysis for dental hygiene care productivity
- Basic understanding of computer software
- Basic computer utilization skills
- Application of contemporary electronic information systems

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- Computer systems for practice management

**5.2 Apply principles of risk management including informed consent and appropriate record keeping in patient care.**

- Principles of record keeping/documentation
- Concepts of professional liability
- Risk management protocols
- Legal responsibilities in patient care management
- Legal responsibilities in personnel management
- Management of patient information
- Quality assurance

**5.3 Apply business and practice management skills.**

- Employment laws and regulations
- Identification of career options
- Demonstration of effective time management skills
- Assesses patient satisfaction and responds appropriately
- Effective communication skills
- Leadership and motivation skills
- Organizational behavior
- Data analysis for dental hygiene care productivity

**5.4 Apply quality assurance, assessment, and improvement concepts.**

- Self-assessment for quality improvement
- Concepts and principles of quality assurance and quality assessment
- Awareness of continuous professional development (lifelong learning)

**5.5 Comply with local, state, and federal regulations including OSHA and HIPAA.**

- Elements of applicable local, state, and federal regulations
- Methods of effective application and pursuance of local, state, and federal regulations

**6. Patient Care**

**6.1 Obtain, record, update and organize accurate and complete medical/dental histories including pertinent psychological and socioeconomic information.**

- Establishment of a patient dialogue to obtain demographic, medical, family and dental histories, psychological and socioeconomic information relevant to dental hygiene care; and patient expectations and goals for dental hygiene care
- Establishment of a patient dialogue to obtain and record the chief complaint of the patient and the history of the present illness
- Establishment of and maintenance of the patient record as an accurate and consistent legal document of patient encounters
- Identification of the patient's record including but not limited to medication(s), potential effect(s) on dental and systemic health, and impact on dental treatment
- Initiation of necessary medical and/or dental consultation or referral in legal media to clarify questions related to the patient's dental and systemic health

**6.2 Perform, record and organize a physical assessment appropriate for dental hygiene care.**

- Performance and recording of an appropriate physical examination not limited to the head and neck

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- Recording of intraoral examination findings including but not limited to dental charting, periodontal examination and indices
- Identification of the need and/or performance of and recording of results of other diagnostic procedures and tests
- Identification of the signs and management of the symptoms of medical emergencies
- Identification of the signs of physical, psychological, verbal and substance abuse
- Performance of risk assessments

**6.3 Formulate a dental hygiene diagnosis utilizing and congruent with the dental diagnosis and other health professionals.**

- Interpretation and correlation of examination and assessment findings
- Determination of the unmet needs of the patient based on analysis of assessment findings
- Formulation of dental hygiene diagnosis
- Determination of priorities and establishes oral health goals with the patient and/or family and/or guardian as an active participant
- Planning of treatments that reflect the impact of behavioral, social and cultural differences in the provision of dental health care
- Development of dental hygiene care plans that reflect the impact of systemic disease and its management on the provision of dental care
- Development of dental hygiene care plans consistent with and supportive of the patient's overall dental treatment plan
- Establishment of a planned sequence of educational and clinical services that include health promotion, and therapeutic and maintenance care
- Communication of the plan for dental hygiene care to interdisciplinary health team members to determine its congruence with the overall plan for oral health care

**6.4 Establish a mutually acceptable dental hygiene care plan with the patient.**

- Presentation of findings and/or diagnoses to the patient
- Explanation of dental hygiene care plan options to patients using understandable and professional terminology
- Response to patient's questions and concerns
- Recording of the final dental hygiene care plan
- Obtainment of written informed consent

**6.5 Monitor and provide for patient comfort associated with dental hygiene care.**

- Utilization of psychological and/or behavioral techniques to assure patient comfort
- Utilization of accepted evidence- based clinical techniques to provide for control of pain and anxiety

**6.6 Prevent, recognize and manage medical emergencies and maintain basic life support.**

- Emergency protocols
- Applied biomedical sciences related to emergency care

**6.7 Utilize current infection control guidelines for all clinical procedures.**

- Local/state/federal regulatory guidelines
- Current infection control protocols
- Applied biomedical sciences related to transmission of disease

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**6.8 Deliver and/or manage the planned dental hygiene evidence-based treatment and education in sequence and in accordance with accepted Standards of Care.**

- Delivery of and/or manages dental hygiene treatment considering the impact of behavioral, social, and cultural manifestations contributing to difficulty
- Provision of humane and compassionate care to all patients
- Delivery of and/or manages periodontal therapy utilizing basic and advanced principles of instrumentation
- Modification of dental hygiene care based on changing patient needs and/or evaluation of achievement of established care plan goals
- Delivery of and/or manages oral health maintenance care
- Provision of adjunct dental hygiene services
- Identification of the need for chemotherapeutic agents, selection and administration of them as appropriate and provision of pre-and post-treatment instructions

**6.9 Evaluate outcomes of comprehensive dental hygiene care and determines an individualized maintenance schedule or additional treatment needs or referral to the appropriate health care provider.**

- Criteria for evaluation
- Evaluation methods
- Mechanisms for continuous quality improvement
- Routine evaluation of professional skills, knowledge, and outcomes of clinical practice

## Professional R.D.H. Program Competencies

### **Introduction**

Competencies for the Dental Hygienist identifies and organizes the knowledge and skills the graduate must acquire to become a critically thinking, competent practitioner in the delivery of dental hygiene services in clinical and alternative practice settings. The document also reflects an evidence-based curriculum that is patient driven, competency based, and criterion referenced. These competencies serve to define the core content of the curriculum. The document provides a method of stating graduate knowledge and skills after completing the dental hygiene program, thus, establishing a basis for the content of all courses. The competencies set standards for identifying relevant content and provides guidance in making decisions related to pedagogy and course sequencing.

The document also sets forth individual measurable competencies, which a student must demonstrate to qualify for graduation and entry into the profession. These competencies assess the degree to which a student can provide the defined standard of dental hygiene care to patients. Competencies for the Dental Hygienist are viewed as dynamic standards, which must be responsive to the professional environment. It is recognized that this educational plan will require regular review for continual improvement.

### **Competency as an Educational Concept**

This document has been organized using the concept of "competencies". The term Competent is described as the repeated demonstration of the student's independent performance of a skill to a defined standard as measured against relevant, valid and reliable criteria.

### **Organization**

#### **Domains**

The organization of this document is structured to list competencies from the general to the more specific. The model depicts six domains centered around the patient: Professionalism, Interpersonal Communication Skills to Function Successfully in a Multicultural Work Environment with Divers Populations, Critical Thinking, Health Promotion, Practice Management and Informatics, and Patient care These represent broad categories of the dental hygiene care process. The concept of domains is intended to encourage an interdisciplinary structure and process in the dental hygiene curriculum.

Encompassing all aspects of dental hygiene care is Professionalism. This domain includes personal and professional responsibility to society through service activities, self evaluation, ethics, values, skills and knowledge integral to all aspects of the dental hygiene profession. The Interpersonal Communication Skills to Function Successfully in a Multicultural Work Environment with Diverse Populations domain includes applying appropriate communication skills with patients, dental and inter-professional health care team members. The Critical Thinking domain involves evaluating and integrating emerging trends in health care and determine their value in dental hygiene practice. Health Promotion competencies focus on disease prevention and evaluation measures to ensure effective health care delivery. The Practice Management and Informatics domain includes clinical and practice management technology,



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applying risk management principles and quality assurance assessments. Patient care domains includes complete record keeping, assessments, treatment and planning appropriate for dental hygiene care. These domains thread throughout the entire dental hygiene care process and are strategically placed as outer circles in the Competency Model.

### **Major Competencies**

Within each domain, "Major Competencies" are involved.

A Major Competency is defined as the ability to perform or provide a particular, complex service or task. The complexity of the service suggests that multiple and more specific abilities are required to support the performance of any Major Competency.

### **Supporting Competencies**

The more specific abilities are considered subdivisions of the "Major Competency" and are termed "Supporting Competencies". The acquisition and demonstration of a "Major Competency" requires a level of mastery of all Supporting Competencies related to that particular service or task. While less complex than a Major Competency, a Supporting Competency also requires foundational knowledge.

### **Foundational Knowledge**

Foundational knowledge is the product of didactic and laboratory instruction, which imparts the information and experience, that are prerequisite for satisfactory mastery of Supporting Competencies.

The biomedical, dental, behavioral, and clinical sciences all provide instruction at the foundational level.

The Competency Model depicts these sciences as the foundation matrix for the entire dental hygiene care process. This education ensures an understanding of basic biological principles for student analysis and synthesis of the interrelationships of the body systems when making decisions regarding oral health services within the context of total body health. These sciences provide the student with knowledge of oral health and disease as a basis for assuming responsibility for assessing, analyzing, planning, implementing and evaluating dental hygiene care. Didactic, small group discussion, seminar, and laboratory instruction provide information and psychomotor experiences that enable students to acquire and demonstrate competence in the clinical setting