

Guidelines for Licensure

(1976:919; 1977:923; 1989:529; 1992:632; 1999:936; 2002:401; 2003:338)

Dental licensure is intended to ensure that only qualified individuals provide dental treatment to the public. Among qualifications deemed essential are satisfactory theoretical knowledge of basic biomedical and dental sciences and satisfactory clinical skill. It is essential that each candidate for an initial license be required to demonstrate these attributes on examination; a written examination for theoretical knowledge and a clinical examination for clinical skill. The clinical examination requirement may also be met by successful completion of a postgraduate program in general dentistry that contains competency assessments or in an ADA recognized specialty, at least one year in length, which is accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation. These guidelines suggest alternate mechanisms for evaluating the theoretical knowledge and clinical skill of an applicant for licensure who holds a dental license in another jurisdiction. Requiring a candidate who is seeking licensure in several jurisdictions to demonstrate his or her theoretical knowledge and clinical skill on separate examinations for each jurisdiction seems unnecessary duplication.

Licensure by Examination: Written examination programs conducted by the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations have achieved broad recognition by state boards of dentistry. National Board dental examinations are conducted in two parts. Part I covers basic biomedical sciences; Part II covers dental sciences. It is recommended that satisfactory performance on Part II of the National Board dental examinations within five years prior to applying for a state dental license be considered adequate testing of theoretical knowledge. National Board regulations require a candidate to pass Part I before participating in Part II. Consequently, this recommendation excludes Part I only from the time limit.

No clinical examination has achieved as broad recognition as have National Board written examinations. Clinical examinations used for dental licensure are conducted by individual state boards of dentistry and by regional clinical testing services. It is recommended that satisfactory performance within the last five years on any state or regional clinical examination at least equivalent in quality and difficulty to the state's own clinical examination be considered adequate testing for clinical skill provided that the candidate for licensure:

- a. is currently licensed in another jurisdiction.
- b. has been in practice since being examined.
- c. is endorsed by the state board of dentistry in the state of his or her current practice.
- d. has not been the subject to final or pending disciplinary action in any state in which he or she is or has been licensed.
- e. has not failed the clinical examination of the state to which he or she is applying within the last three years.

Licensure by Credentials: The American Dental Association believes that an evaluation of a practicing dentist's theoretical knowledge and clinical skill based on his or her performance record can provide as much protection to the public as would an evaluation based on examination. Issuing a license using a performance record in place of examinations is termed licensure by credentials.

All candidates for licensure by credentials are required to fulfill basic education and practice requirements. Further it is recommended that licensure by credentials be available only to a candidate who:

- a. has graduated from a dental school accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation or has completed a supplementary predoctoral education program of at least two academic years in an accredited dental school and has been certified by the dean of an accredited dental school as having achieved the same level of didactic and clinical competence as expected of a graduate of the school, or has completed an educational experience that is recognized by the board as equivalent to the above.
- b. is currently licensed by a licensing jurisdiction within a state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a dependency of the United States.
- c. has been in practice or full-time dental education immediately prior to applying.
- d. is endorsed by the state board of dentistry in the state of current practice.
- e. has not been the subject of final or pending disciplinary action in any state in which he or she is or has been licensed.
- f. has not failed the clinical examination of the state to which he or she is applying within the last three years.

Additional criteria to determine the professional competence of a licensed dentist could include:

- g. Information from the National Practitioner Data Bank and/or the AADE Clearinghouse for Disciplinary Information.
- h. Questioning under oath.
- i. Results of peer review reports from constituent societies and/or federal dental services.
- j. Substance abuse testing/treatment.
- k. Background checks for criminal or fraudulent activities.
- l. Participation in continuing education.
- m. A current certificate in cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
- n. Recent patient case reports and/or oral defense of diagnosis and treatment plans.
- o. No physical or psychological impairment that would adversely affect the ability to deliver quality dental care.
- p. Agreement to initiate practice in the credentialing jurisdiction within a reasonable period of time to ensure that licensure is based on credentials that are current at the time practice is initiated.
- q. Proof of professional liability coverage and that such coverage has not been refused, declined, canceled, nonrenewed or modified.

Alternate ways that current theoretical knowledge might be documented follow. It is recommended that for a candidate who meets eligibility requirements for licensure by credentials, these methods be considered as possible alternatives to the written examination requirement.

1. Successful completion of an accredited advanced dental education program in the last ten years.
2. A total of at least 180 hours of acceptable, formal scientific continuing education in the last ten years, with a maximum credit of 60 hours for each two-year period.
3. Successful completion of a recognized specialty board examination in the last ten years.
4. Teaching experience of at least one day per week or its equivalent in an accredited dental education program for at least six of the last ten years.

Possible documentation for current clinical skill appears in the following list. Provided that eligibility requirements for licensure by credentials are met, it is recommended that these methods be considered as possible alternatives to satisfactory performance on a clinical examination.

1. Successful completion of an accredited general practice residency or dental internship within the last ten years.
2. Successful completion of an accredited dental specialty education program in a clinical discipline within the last ten years.
3. A total of at least 180 hours of acceptable clinically oriented continuing education in the last ten years, with a maximum credit of 60 hours for each two-year period.
4. Clinical teaching of at least one day per week or its equivalent in an accredited dental education program, including a hospital-based advanced dental education program, for at least six of the last ten years.
5. Presenting case histories of patients treated by the candidate in the last five years, with preoperative and postoperative radiographs, covering procedures required on the state clinical examination, for discussion with the state board.

Licensure by Credentials for Internationally Trained Dentists: It is ADA policy that internationally trained dentists, who were licensed by their respective jurisdictions prior to implementation of the requirement of a two-year supplementary education program in an accredited dental school, be granted the same benefits of freedom of movement as any other member of the Association.

Specialty Licensure: The American Dental Association urges constituent dental societies and state dental boards to implement specialty licensure by credentials and/or specialty licensure as a top priority. The Association urges states to consider the following provisions regarding specialty licensure by credentials:

- a. All specialists should be required to have passed a state dental board approved general dentistry examination and have an entry-level license issued by a state or a U.S. territory before being eligible to be credentialed or to take a specialty examination in another state.
- b. Specialists should not be required to pass an additional general dentistry examination when applying for a license to practice the specialty
- c. Specialists who have passed a specialty licensure examination in another state should be granted licensure by credentials without further examination.
- d. States should be urged to enact provisions by which a dental specialist licensed in another jurisdiction may be issued a license by credentials to allow the specialist who holds diplomate status from an ADA-recognized dental specialty certifying board or who has completed an advanced specialty education program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation to practice the specific specialty.
- e. Specialists who hold Diplomate status from an ADA-recognized dental specialty certifying board or who have completed an advanced specialty education program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation and meet all other state requirements for licensure should not be required to take any additional examinations.
- f. Specialty licensure examinations and criteria for credentialing should be reviewed annually for reliability and validity and updated regularly to protect the public.