Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations

Da Silva, John D., 2023, Massachusetts, chair, American Dental Education Association
Herro, Anthony, 2024, Arizona, vice chair, American Association of Dental Boards
Grzesikowski, Tami, 2026, Florida, American Dental Hygienists’ Association
Hogan, Rachel E., 2024, Oregon, American Dental Education Association
Iranmanesh, M. Reza, 2026, Florida, American Dental Association
Jang, Han-Na, 2024, Virginia, American Dental Hygienists’ Association
Lau, Tommy, 2023, Michigan, American Student Dental Association
Loomer, Peter, 2025, Texas, American Dental Education Association
McKee, Julie, 2025, Kentucky, American Association of Dental Boards
Patel, Jeetendra, 2025, Louisiana, American Association of Dental Boards
Schiano, Frank, 2025, Massachusetts, American Dental Association
Sherrard, James R., Connecticut, 2026, Public Member
Starskiak, Mary A., 2023, Illinois, American Association of Dental Boards
Tepe, Patrick J., 2023, Wisconsin, American Dental Association
Zajkowski, Mark, 2025, Maine, American Association of Dental Boards

Open position: American Association of Dental Boards

Waldschmidt, David M., senior director and director
Grady, Matthew, director
Hinshaw, Kathleen J., director
Matyasik, Michael, senior manager
Curtis, Alexis, manager
Davis, Laura, manager
Hussong, Nicholas B., senior manager
Svendby, Bryan, senior manager
Worner, Brad, manager
Yang, Chien-Lin, senior manager

The JCNDE’s 2022–23 Board of Trustees liaison and student observer are Dr. Karin Irani (Thirteenth District) and Mr. Christopher Elkhal (American Student Dental Association), respectively.

Areas of Responsibility as Set Forth in the Bylaws or Governance and Organizational Manual of the American Dental Association

As listed in Chapter IX, Section 30.B. of the ADA Constitution and Bylaws, the duties of the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations (JCNDE) shall be to:

a. Provide and conduct examinations for all purposes, including assisting state boards of dentistry and dental examiners in exercising their authority to determine qualifications of dentists and other oral health care professionals seeking certification and/or licensure to practice in any state or other jurisdiction of the United States.
b. Make rules and regulations for the conduct of examinations and the certification of successful candidates.
c. Serve as a resource for dentists and other oral health care professionals concerning the development of examinations.
d. Provide a means for a candidate to appeal an adverse decision of the Commission.
e. Submit an annual report to the House of Delegates of this Association, and interim reports, on request.
f. Submit an annual budget to the Board of Trustees of the Association.
Advancing ADA Strategic Goals and Objectives: Agency Programs, Projects, Results and Success Measures

The Joint Commission is an agency of the ADA that maintains independent authority to pursue activities in accordance with the duties assigned to it within the ADA Constitution and Bylaws. As such, the Joint Commission determines its own corresponding goals and objectives. The information presented below is derived from the JCNDE’s strategic plan, with corresponding updates provided in italics after each statement.

JCNDE Strategic Goals and Key Objectives

Goal One: Develop and conduct highly reliable, state of the art examinations to support decisions about licensure and certification of members of the oral health care team.

1. Conduct the National Board Dental Examination (NBDE) Part I through July 30, 2020 and Part II through July 31, 2022, and ensure policies for the orderly, secure and fair administration of these examinations are implemented. The NBDE Part I was sunset on December 31, 2020. The JCNDE extended the deadline for the NBDE Part II from July 31, 2022 to December 31, 2022. All candidates eligible for the NBDE Part II were allowed one additional testing attempt between August 1 and December 31, 2022.

2. Conduct the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination (NBDHE) and ensure policies for the orderly, secure and fair administration of this examination are implemented. The NBDHE continues to be administered in an orderly, secure, and fair manner. In 2022, the JCNDE approved a draft roadmap for NBDHE development, which further strengthens this important examination program.

3. Successfully transition to the Integrated National Board Dental Examination (INBDE) program by August 1, 2022 and ensure policies for the orderly, secure and fair administration of this examination are implemented. The INBDE was launched on August 1, 2020, and since that time more than 15,000 INBDE administrations have successfully occurred. In 2023 the JCNDE will consider a roadmap for INBDE development that will outline research activities from 2023 through 2026. This roadmap will help ensure that INBDE development continues in an optimal fashion.

4. Further integrate best practices in testing into JCNDE examinations by introducing multi-stage adaptive testing, 3-parameter logistic (3PL) item response theory for the NBDHE, and the development of an image bank, to support the validity of JCNDE programs. The JCNDE continues to make significant progress in each of the areas indicated. The aforementioned NBDHE Roadmap calls for the utilization of an advanced scoring model for the NBDHE, with implementation to occur no sooner than 2025. This Roadmap also requires investigation into the feasibility of implementing multi-stage adaptive testing for the NBDHE.

5. Explore the potential use of other innovations in testing, such as automatic item generation, simulations (“gamification” of testing), video, partial credit scoring and the use of testing windows, and develop recommendations on whether to pursue these testing modalities. Ongoing review and investigation continues to occur in this area, based on identified needs. In 2022 the JCNDE proposed the creation of new 3D models and medical illustrations for the Dental Licensure Objective Structured Clinical Examination (DLOSCE) and Dental Hygiene Licensure Objective Structured Clinical Examination (DHLOSCE).

6. Engage key stakeholders and communities of interest in discussions of potential new examinations and testing modalities. The DHLOSCE business plan was reviewed and approved by the JCNDE in 2021, and in 2022 and 2023 the JCNDE has appointed highly qualified subject matter experts to serve as test constructors and build content for this examination. The JCNDE is also monitoring dental therapy as a potential profession, to understand whether it could be appropriate to build a corresponding examination at a later date.
Goal Two: Serve as a trusted and independent resource on assessment for the oral health care professions to state dental boards and other key stakeholders.

1. Develop a strategic communications plan to guide JCNDE’s communications and engagement with key stakeholder groups (i.e., stakeholder mapping, understanding stakeholders’ interests and needs, reframing the messaging around the “why,” increasing understanding of the range of resources JCNDE can provide). JCNDE communications are an ongoing and vital activity. Each JCNDE standing committee identifies specific communication needs based on committee discussion and the JCNDE’s strategic goals. These needs in turn are forwarded to the JCNDE’s newly established standing committee on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement, which formulates the JCNDE’s communication plan. The plan is then implemented by staff.

2. Provide high quality tools, credible information and guidance about best practices in testing and assessment to support state boards in carrying out their role regarding the licensure and certification of oral health care professionals. This represents an ongoing activity. The JCNDE has conducted webinars and provided presentations to dental boards and licensing agencies, the American Association of Dental Boards (AADB), and the American Association of Dental Administrators (AADA). During these presentations staff routinely point to the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, ADA, NCME, 2014) as a primary reference in support of valid, fair, and reliable examinations. Staff regularly attend professional meetings and industry conferences involving testing (e.g., Association of Test Publishers) to remain fully informed on industry best practices and new developments.

3. Increase understanding of the mission and work of the JCNDE among members of the ADA House of Delegates (HOD), and the importance of JCNDE’s position and reputation as a credible and independent testing agency. This goal was articulated to facilitate approval of desired Bylaws changes that were submitted to the ADA HOD in 2019. The desired changes were approved by the HOD at that time, and since then the JCNDE has expanded this goal to include additional communities of interest. In communicating with communities of interest the JCNDE continues to assert its position and reputation as a professional and independent testing agency.

4. Reduce incidents of cheating and sharing of exam questions among test takers by increasing understanding of the impact on the exam’s cost and validity, stressing professionalism, and raising awareness of the potential consequences of such actions. The JCNDE continues to pursue activity in support of this goal. Plans are in development to roll out informational materials (i.e., posters, articles, and videos), educating students and examination candidates on the impact and consequences of rule violations. In addition, the JCNDE determined that rule violations and/or irregularities occurring in separate examination programs implemented by the Department of Testing Services (e.g., the Advanced Dental Admission Test Program) may result in penalties that impact a candidate’s ability to test in a National Board Examination program.

5. Utilize Commissioners as peer ambassadors to increase understanding of the JCNDE and build stronger relationships with state dental boards. In promoting the DLOSCE with dental boards, the JCNDE has utilized a combination of Commissioners, former DLOSCE Steering Committee members, and staff to deliver the message. This has helped in promoting the DLOSCE, and will continue to be utilized going forward.

Goal Three: Strengthen the governance of JCNDE to increase responsiveness, credibility and independence.

1. Undertake a comprehensive review of the JCNDE’s governing documents (e.g., bylaws, standing rules, exam regulations, composition, and structure) and make recommendations to strengthen the governance systems and structures as appropriate. JCNDE governance documents were comprehensively reviewed and revised in 2019, with corresponding changes approved by the JCNDE as appropriate, or moved forward to the ADA Board of Trustees and HOD as applicable. The ADA HOD accepted the changes recommended by the JCNDE. The JCNDE has appreciated the support of the ADA BOT and HOD, and the confidence that has been placed in the JCNDE.
Identify opportunities to increase the agility and nimbleness of the JCNDE’s governance and decision-making processes. The JCNDE reviews its policies and governance documents on an annual basis, providing agility and nimbleness. Additionally, the JCNDE has conferred additional powers to its Chair in times of crisis, to expedite and facilitate decision-making when time is of the essence.

**Emerging Issues and Trends**

The following communicates the actions of the JCNDE since its prior Annual Report to the HOD:

1. Pursued efforts in support of the strategic direction of the JCNDE as it pursues its mission and vision. This includes the following:
   A. Directed staff to initiate efforts so that a JCNDE strategic planning meeting could take place in the second quarter of 2023. This meeting involved careful scrutiny of the JCNDE’s mission, vision, goals, objectives, and governance, while also considering the political, economic, social, technological, legal, and educational contexts within which the JCNDE pursues its activities.
   B. Directed staff to survey boards to better understand the status of the profession of dental therapy within each board’s jurisdiction, and boards’ perceptions of the need for a National Board Dental Therapy Examination (NBDTE).
   C. Directed staff to develop a strategic roadmap for the dental examinations of the JCNDE, to align efforts so goals and objectives can be achieved as effectively as possible.

2. Approved actions in support of the continued fairness of administrations of the examinations of the JCNDE.
   A. Approved a fairness and sensitivity review process proposed by Department of Testing Services (DTS) staff and directed staff to pilot the process in 2023—or as soon as logistically feasible—by applying the process to a subset of INBDE, DLOSCE, and NBDHE items.
   B. Directed staff to solicit applications from individuals willing to serve as fairness and sensitivity reviewers for the examination programs of the JCNDE, with review and selection of such individuals occurring in 2023.
   C. Granted a request to extend the NBDE Part II discontinuation date to help ensure that candidates who had prepared to challenge this examination but encountered difficulties beyond their control—due to the global pandemic, difficulties in obtaining visas, etc.—had a reasonable opportunity to do so.

3. Strengthened the anticipated contributions of JCNDE members and test constructors, through further reduction of conflicts of interest and enabling greater flexibility in contributor selection decisions:
   A. A member of the JCNDE may not simultaneously serve or have served as a principal officer or an active examiner of an external clinical testing or test development agency within the last five (5) years or three (3) years for officers and examiners, respectively. The preceding applies to Commissioners whose appointments are made subsequent to the JCNDE’s June 2020 meeting.
   B. JCNDE test constructors cannot simultaneously serve as an examiner or officer for any external clinical testing or test development agencies, nor can they have served on such an agency for the past five (5) years.¹
   C. With respect to the procedures for electing a public member, the JCNDE eliminated the requirement that at least two qualified nominees be identified, in favor of a provision

¹ This provision applies to test constructors whose appointments are made subsequent to the Joint Commission’s June 2022 meeting.
indicating that the JCNDE may choose to delay a Public Member appointment until a suitable, qualified candidate is identified. This is intended to provide flexibility to the JCNDE in situations where a single, highly qualified Public Member candidate has applied for the role.

D. The JCNDE selected a new Public Member to serve an upcoming term beginning in October 2022 and concluding in October 2026.

E. In limited instances, the JCNDE may permit a test constructor who does not strictly meet requirements to move forward, if the JCNDE’s perspective is that the quality of contribution provided by the individual far exceeds any challenges incurred due to the lack of strict adherence.

4. Strengthened and aligned the JCNDE’s efforts to assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities of aspiring Dental Hygiene professionals, to provide comprehensive and precise evaluation.

A. Adopted Strategic Goals and a Roadmap to help set the strategic direction for the Dental Hygiene examination programs of the JCNDE, including incorporation of advanced scoring models and multi-stage adaptive testing.

B. Monitored progress and efforts to design, construct, and implement the JCNDE’s Dental Hygiene Licensure Objective Structured Clinical Examination (DHLOSCE), the launch of which is anticipated in 2024.

5. Advanced the security of National Board Examination (NBE) administrations, to further increase confidence that results of NBEs provide an accurate representation of candidate skills and abilities.

6. Reviewed JCNDE communication activities and identified opportunities for improvement and enhanced communications.

A. Reviewed the results of a comprehensive survey of dental and dental hygiene candidates and educators, to better understand the effectiveness of JCNDE communications and guide future communication efforts.

B. Identified specific areas where communication is needed, and directed staff to proceed as indicated to help address these needs.

C. Promoted new JCNDE initiatives (e.g., Multi-Stage Adaptive Testing, shortening of the National Board Examinations), and socialized these concepts with communities of interest to help ensure the readiness of those communities.

7. The Joint Commission continues to take action to ensure it has sufficient, highly capable and knowledgeable test constructors to build rigorous examination content. This occurred through the appointment and reappointment of DLOSCE, INBDE, and NBDHE test constructors to serve in the 2023 DLOSCE, INBDE, and NBDHE Test Constructor Pools.

8. The Joint Commission monitors its examinations closely and regularly to ensure they are psychometrically valid and performing as intended.

9. The next annual meetings of the JCNDE will be held on June 28, 2023 and June 26, 2024. The next annual State Dental Board Forums will occur June 26, 2023 and June 24, 2024.

10. The following provides performance information for each of the examinations of the JCNDE.

**NBDE Part II:** Table 1 presents performance trends for the NBDE Part II over the past 10 years. As shown in Table 1, the number of first-time candidates from accredited programs ranged between 5,338 and 6,227 between 2013 and 2020, then dropped substantially in 2021 and 2022. This decline is attributable to candidates transitioning from the NBDE to the INBDE program, in response to the sunsetting of Part II in 2022. Across the ten-year period indicated, failure rates for first-time candidates from accredited programs ranged from 6.3% (2013) to 11.7% (2022). Failure rates for
first-time candidates from non-accredited programs were higher across the board, ranging from 23.3% (2019) to 42.0% (2015).

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Accredited First-time</th>
<th>Accredited Repeating</th>
<th>Non-Accredited First-time</th>
<th>Non-Accredited Repeating</th>
<th>Total First-time</th>
<th>Total Repeating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% Failing</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% Failing</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% Failing</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>5,338</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>1,140</td>
<td>40.0</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>5,704</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>1,557</td>
<td>37.3</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>5,834</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>1,630</td>
<td>42.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>6,034</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>1,861</td>
<td>34.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017*</td>
<td>6,138</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>1,698</td>
<td>34.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>5,769</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>1,759</td>
<td>23.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>5,985</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>1,562</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>6,227</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>26.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>4,332</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>1,331</td>
<td>28.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>1,201</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>36.8</td>
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</table>

* A new standard was introduced this year, based on updated standard setting activities.
*Note: The NBDE Part II was discontinued in 2022.*

**INBDE:** Table 2 presents performance trends for the INBDE in the past three years. As shown, the number of candidates completing the INBDE has increased significantly in virtually all categories, due to the discontinuation of the NBDE Part II on December 31, 2022. Failure rates for the INBDE have been low for first-time candidates from accredited programs, across the initial years of the INBDE’s implementation. Conversely, failure rates for first-time candidates from non-accredited programs are significantly higher, ranging from 38.8% in 2020 to 25.3% in 2022. The preceding indicates that candidates trained by CODA-accredited dental programs are well-prepared to challenge the INBDE, as compared to those educated by non-accredited programs.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Accredited First Attempt</th>
<th>Accredited Mixed Attempt</th>
<th>Accredited Retake</th>
<th>Non-Accredited First Attempt</th>
<th>Non-Accredited Mixed Attempt</th>
<th>Non-Accredited Retake</th>
<th>Total All Attempts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>% Fail</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>% Fail</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>% Fail</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>2,018</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>5,837</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NBDHE:** Table 3 presents performance trends for the NBDHE over the past 10 years. As shown, administration volume has generally been quite consistent, with first-time candidates from accredited programs testing at much higher volumes than candidates from non-accredited programs. Decreases and increases in test administration volume and failure rates occurring between 2020 and 2022 are largely a function of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fewer administrations could occur in 2020 due to pandemic restrictions. Correspondingly, candidates became further removed from their studies and clinical experiences at the time of their (delayed) test administrations, and consequently performed less well on the examination. This pattern is illustrated through
corresponding increases in failure rates (13.4% and 14.3% in 2021 and 2022, respectively) and more retake administrations in those years.

DLOSCE: Table 4 presents performance trends for the Dental Licensure Objective Structured Clinical Examination (DLOSCE) in the past three years. Table 4 shows a decrease in administration volume relative to the first year of this examination program, but an increase in failure rates attributable to the rigorous nature of this examination program.

**Responses to House of Delegates Resolutions**

The Joint Commission did not receive any assignments from the ADA House of Delegates in 2022.

**Self-Assessment**

The Joint Commission is next scheduled to conduct a self-assessment in 2027.

**Policy Review**

While the Joint Commission is an agency of the ADA, it maintains independent authority to provide and administer licensure exams in dentistry and dental hygiene. The Joint Commission maintains its policies and procedures in the following documents: 1) *Rules of the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations*, and 2) *Operational and Policy Manual of the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations*. Changes to these documents were noted previously in this report.
Commission Minutes

For more information on recent activities, see the Commission’s Unofficial Actions Report on ADA.org.