Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations

Iranmanesh, M. Reza, 2026, Florida, American Dental Association, chair
Gasparoni, Alberto, 2028, Iowa, American Dental Education Association, vice chair
Cherry, Brad, 2029, Florida, American Association of Dental Boards
Chiang, Michelle, 2026, California, American Student Dental Association
Gordon, Sara, 2027, Washington, American Dental Education Association
Grzesikowski, Tami, 2026, Florida, American Dental Hygienists' Association
Hendricksen, A.R., 2027, Virginia, American Association of Dental Boards
Kabel, Betty, 2028, Florida, American Dental Hygienists' Association
Lewis, Imani E., 2026, Washington DC, American Association of Dental Boards
Lyon, Cindy, 2029, California, American Dental Association
Mikell, Julia K., 2028, South Carolina, American Association of Dental Boards
Qari, Hiba, 2029, Washington, American Dental Education Association
Sherrard, James R., Connecticut, 2026, Public Member
Waryjas, Ronald J., Illinois, 2027, American Dental Association
Open positions (2): American Association of Dental Boards

Waldschmidt, David M., senior director, and director
Grady, Matthew, director
Svendby, Bryan, interim director
Davis, Laura, manager
Green, Sara, manager
Hussong, Nicholas B., senior manager
Matyasik, Michael, senior manager
Lopez, Sandra G., manager
Worner, Brad, manager
Yang, Chien-Lin, senior manager

Mercer, James, E., Sixteenth District, Board of Trustees liaison
Bone, Emily, Illinois, American Student Dental Association observer

Duties 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 *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.

Key Accomplishments and Outcomes

The JCNDE is the leading resource for the valid, reliable, and fair assessment of oral health professionals. The JCNDE 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 ("Bylaws")*. As such, the JCNDE determines its own corresponding goals and objectives. The information presented below is derived from the JCNDE's strategic plan.

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.

Activities and Outcomes:

1. *Conduct the Dental Licensure Objective Structured Clinical Examination (DLOSCE) and ensure policies for the orderly, secure, and fair administration of this examination are implemented.* The DLOSCE is a state-of-the-art, high-stakes dental clinical licensure examination that effectively protects the public. The JCNDE continues to build its library of content for this valid, reliable, ethical, and fair examination program, which has been built by dental subject matter experts in accordance with professional standards and is supported by strong empirical evidence. In 2026, the DLOSCE will be incorporated directly into the American Board of Dental Examiners (ADEX) Dental Examination, replacing ADEX' current OSCE Component (i.e., the ADEX DSE OSCE) through an exclusive licensing agreement between the ADA and ADEX. The ADEX Dental Examination will continue to assess candidates' clinical hand skills, but will now also benefit from the DLOSCE's assessment of professional clinical judgment. The JCNDE will continue to serve as the governing body overseeing the DLOSCE, and the ADA continues to serve as the legal owner of the DLOSCE. ADEX will sunset its DSE OSCE no later than August 1, 2026, and subsequently all ADEX Dental Examination administrations will include the DLOSCE.

2. *Conduct the Dental Hygiene Licensure Objective Structured Clinical Examination (DHLOSCE) and ensure policies for the orderly, secure, and fair administration of this examination are implemented.* The DHLOSCE is a state-of-the-art, high-stakes dental hygiene clinical licensure examination that was released in December 2025. The DHLOSCE has been constructed in accordance with the same, exacting standards pursued by the DLOSCE and has demonstrated similar sound psychometric performance. Over 140 DHLOSCE administrations have occurred as of May 20, 2026.

3. *Conduct the Integrated National Board Dental Examination (INBDE) and ensure policies for the orderly, secure, and fair administration of this examination are implemented.* The INBDE was fully implemented in 2022 and remains the premier state-of-the-art cognitive dental licensure examination. In June 2024, the JCNDE implemented a new performance standard for the INBDE, which further increased the level of rigor associated with this examination. Over 12,000 administrations of the INBDE occurred in 2025. A dental practice analysis is scheduled to occur in 2026 and 2027, to inform future updates to the examination content domains for both the INBDE and DLOSCE.

4. *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 perform extremely well and is poised to benefit from numerous recent initiatives outlined in the JCNDE's dental hygiene strategic roadmap. This includes approved updates to test content specifications based on findings from the JCNDE's recently completed dental hygiene practice analysis, an updated scoring model that will enhance measurement precision and candidate skill estimation, and an approved, updated NBHDE performance standard. The latter changes will be implemented in 2026. The incorporation of multi-stage adaptive testing into NBHDE administrations is anticipated to occur in 2028, shortening the NBDHE and enhancing test security while simultaneously retaining the NBDHE's strong psychometric properties.

5. *Supporting decisions about the licensure and certification of members of the oral health care team.* The examinations of the JCNDE are professionally developed and highly effective in protecting the public health. This is well-documented in annually published technical reports that are made freely and publicly available on the JCNDE's website (http://jcnde.ada.org). Utilization of the examinations of the JCNDE by state boards benefits not only the public, but also the dental and dental hygiene professions, by helping to ensure that entry-level professionals possess the skills necessary for safe practice. The JCNDE has a long and distinguished track record of success in delivering valid, reliable, ethical, and fair examinations.

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.

Activities and Outcomes:

1. *Increase utilization of examinations by dental boards.* The incorporation of the DLOSCE into the ADEX Dental Examination in 2026 will substantially increase its utilization by dental boards, as all ADEX Dental Examination administrations will include the DLOSCE beginning no later than August 1, 2026. The JCNDE was also pleased to announce the acceptance of the DHLOSCE as a board-approved option in fulfillment of clinical dental hygiene licensure requirements in Arizona, Kentucky, and Oregon. Over 140 candidates attempted the DHLOSCE during the first two DHLOSCE administration windows in 2025 and 2026. The JCNDE has seen steady year-over-year growth in INBDE and NBDHE administration volume subsequent to the pandemic.

2. *Increase efforts to advocate for the examinations of the JCNDE.* The JCNDE continues to deliver presentations, webinars, and forums, sharing information about its examinations with state boards and other stakeholders. The examinations of the JCNDE have strong reputations as professionally developed valid, reliable, ethical, and fair measures of candidate skills.

3. *Publish annual technical reports.* The JCNDE makes its technical reports freely available to the public, permitting anyone outside of the JCNDE—including psychometricians and other testing professionals—to carefully scrutinize and examine the quality and performance of the JCNDE's National Board Examinations. This is consistent with guidance contained in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*.

4. *Appoint new JCNDE Test Constructors and reappoint currently serving Test Constructors in support of the examination programs of the JCNDE.* The JCNDE has expressed its heartfelt thanks to the hundreds of highly qualified JCNDE Test Constructors who help build the examinations of the JCNDE. The Joint Commission's examinations would not be possible without these exceptional individuals who work incredibly hard in service to their profession and the public.

Goal Three: Maintain the responsiveness, credibility, and independence of the JCNDE.

Activities and Outcomes:

1. *Increase the responsiveness and strategic agility of the JCNDE.* In December of 2023, the JCNDE approved significant changes to its approach to committees and meetings. The JCNDE had previously conducted its work through five separate standing committees (Administration, Research and Development, Dental Hygiene, Examination Development, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement) each involving roughly a third of Commissioners, with some areas of work shared across these committees, and with policy making decisions occurring during an annual meeting where the work of the standing committees was discussed and acted upon. The JCNDE has now transitioned to a flatter structure with twice-per-year policy-making meetings involving all Commissioners, and an annual informal forum where Commissioners are provided an opportunity to engage in active discussion on topics of importance. These changes have been well-received by Commissioners and were consistent with recommendations emerging from the

JCNDE's May 2023 strategic planning meeting. These changes were fully implemented in 2024, and the JCNDE is pleased to report that this work has increased the operational efficiency and strategic agility of the JCNDE, streamlining operations and better positioning the JCNDE for the future. Most notably, these changes have been extremely important in facilitating work efforts concerning the aforementioned ADA-ADEX agreement, providing JCNDE staff with the additional bandwidth needed to work closely with ADEX staff as the two teams work together to incorporate the DLOSCE into the ADEX Dental Examination in time for ADEX' 2026-2027 examination cycle.

2. *Maintain the credibility and independence of the JCNDE.* The JCNDE continues to operate effectively and efficiently as a Commission of the ADA. The JCNDE operates in accordance with its *Bylaws* mandated duties while maintaining direct oversight of its *Rules* and *Policies*. The preceding permits the JCNDE to independently conduct its work in a credible fashion. The JCNDE appreciates the support of the ADA House of Delegates in this regard.

Emerging Issues and Trends

The Commission has identified the following emerging trend(s) or issue(s):

The JCNDE recognizes that its psychometric and high-stakes testing activities occur in a highly complex landscape involving significant regulatory considerations (e.g., entry-level licensure requirements, licensure compacts), legal issues (e.g., intellectual property, privacy), financial considerations (examination pricing, student debt), social issues (e.g., test fairness, bias, adverse impact, test-optional movements), technological changes (artificial intelligence, remote proctoring, candidate application systems, test administration platforms), test security issues (proxy testing, item harvesting, cheating), professional issues (e.g., scope of practice, delineation of duties and differences across US jurisdictions), political and educational considerations (e.g., equity, international candidates, admissions practices), and occasional unforeseen major events (cybersecurity incidents, pandemic) that impact the JCNDE's work. The JCNDE has developed strategic roadmaps to help advance its mission and chart a path forward amidst this environmental complexity.

Dental Examinations Roadmap: The following summarizes the strategic roadmap for the dental examination programs of the JCNDE:

- Integrate the DLOSCE into the ADEX Dental Examination. This includes incorporating the DLOSCE into a new item bank, test administration platform, and results reporting platform, and coordinating with ADEX staff on all corresponding activities to facilitate implementation.
- Conduct a dental practice analysis in 2026 and 2027, to inform future updates to the examination content domains for the INBDE and DLOSCE.
- Consider potential implementation of multi-stage adaptive testing for the INBDE as a means of shortening the examination and increasing test security, while still maintaining strong psychometric properties.
- Convene panels of subject matter experts in 2027 to consider the results of the dental practice analysis and recommend corresponding updates to the INBDE and DLOSCE test specifications.
- Convene panels of subject matter experts in 2028 to recommend new performance standards for the INBDE and DLOSCE, factoring in any updates to the test specifications.

Dental Hygiene Examinations Roadmap: The following summarizes the strategic roadmap for the dental hygiene examination programs of the JCNDE:

- Conduct standard setting activities for the DHLOSCE to identify the performance standard (i.e., cut score) for the examination.
- Implement three-parameter logistic (3PL) model scoring for the NBDHE in 2026, concurrent with implementation of the updated NBDHE test specifications and updated NBDHE performance standard noted previously in this report. 3PL scoring will provide a more accurate and precise estimate of a candidate's skill level, thereby further improving the quality of information available to dental and dental hygiene boards as they make licensure decisions.

- Implement multi-stage adaptive testing for the NBDHE no sooner than 2028. The introduction of multi-stage adaptive testing will shorten the NBDHE and further enhance test security, without sacrificing the precision of NBDHE results.

Integrated National Board Dental Examination: Table 1 presents performance trends for the INBDE since its release in 2020. As shown, the number of candidates completing the INBDE has increased significantly across virtually all groups, due to the discontinuation of the NBDE Part II on December 31, 2022. INBDE failure rates were initially low for first-time candidates educated by accredited programs but began increasing significantly in 2024 with the implementation of a new performance standard that increased the rigor of the examination. Failure rates for first-time candidates educated by non-CODA-accredited programs are significantly higher across all of the years shown. The preceding indicates that candidates educated by CODA-accredited dental programs are well-prepared to challenge the INBDE, as compared to those educated by non-CODA-accredited programs.

Table 1. INBDE Failure Rate, by Candidate Group and Year

	Accredited†				Non-Accredited‡				Total	
	First Attempt [a]		Retake [b]		First Attempt [a]		Retake [b]		All Attempts	
	N	% Fail	N	% Fail	N	% Fail	N	% Fail	N	% Fail
2020	205	1.0	69	7.3	147	38.8	117	58.1	538	24.5
2021	2,021	1.3	245	16.0	1,341	33.1	971	55.8	4,578	22.3
2022	5,852	0.8	234	13.2	2,154	25.3	1,145	44.7	9,385	12.1
2023	6,659	0.4	136	14.0	3,301	15.9	1,212	33.8	11,308	8.7
2024*	6,636	4.8	168	32.1	4,137	25.3	919	52.8	11,860	16.1
2025	6,816	7.2	608	27.0	3,480	34.9	1,335	50.5	12,239	20.8

[a] Indicates candidates who had never previously attempted the INBDE, NBDE Part I, or NBDE Part II.
[b] Indicates candidates who had previously attempted and failed the INBDE, NBDE Part I, or NBDE Part II.
† Indicates candidates educated by dental education programs accredited by CODA.
‡ Indicates candidates educated by dental education programs not accredited by CODA.
*A new standard was introduced this year, based on updated standard setting activities.

National Board Dental Hygiene Examination: Table 2 presents performance trends for the NBDHE over the past 10 years. As shown, administration volume has generally been quite consistent, with first-time candidates educated by CODA accredited programs testing at much higher volumes than candidates educated by non-CODA-accredited programs. Across the ten years indicated, the highest first attempt administration volume for candidates educated by CODA accredited programs occurred in 2025. Changes in test administration volume and increased failure rates between 2020 and 2022 are largely attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding test administration restrictions. In short, candidate administrations were delayed, causing candidates to be further removed from their studies and clinical experiences. Consequently, candidates performed less well on the NBDHE. 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. The first-time failure rate for candidates educated by CODA accredited programs has decreased gradually since reaching its high in 2022.

Table 2. NBDHE Failure Rate, by Candidate Group and Year										
	Accredited†				Non-Accredited‡				Total	
	First Attempt		Retake		First Attempt		Retake		First Attempts and Retakes	
Year	N	% Fail	N	% Fail	N	% Fail	N	% Fail	N	% Fail
2016	7,397	5.1	506	41.7	214	27.6	45	35.6	8,162	8.1
2017*	7,262	6.2	677	49.8	253	33.2	81	46.9	8,273	11.0
2018	7,360	5.8	654	46.2	328	34.8	88	44.3	8,430	10.4
2019	7,316	7.9	852	49.1	377	35.5	119	51.3	8,664	13.8
2020	6,938	9.7	764	51.3	302	44.0	135	60.7	8,139	15.7
2021	7,478	13.4	1,571	50.5	534	51.3	271	59.4	9,854	22.7
2022	6,933	14.3	1,721	54.5	235	55.7	168	66.1	9,057	24.0
2023	7,456	12.1	1,682	53.9	295	46.4	172	61.1	9,605	21.4
2024	7,709	10.9	1,537	51.9	342	37.1	175	64.6	9,763	19.3
2025	7,893	10.1	1,560	54.9	299	40.1	124	59.7	9,876	18.7

*A new standard was introduced this year, based on updated standard setting activities.
† Indicates candidates educated by dental education programs accredited by CODA.
‡ Indicates candidates educated by dental education programs not accredited by CODA.

Dental Licensure Objective Structured Clinical Examination: Table 3 presents administration volume and performance trends for the DLOSCE in the past six years. DLOSCE administration volume has been low relative to the other examinations of the JCNDE but is expected to increase substantially when the DLOSCE is integrated into the ADEX Dental Examination. If administrations from 2020 through 2025 are combined, the first-time DLOSCE failure rate is 10% for candidates educated by CODA-accredited programs.

Table 3. DLOSCE Failure Rate, by Candidate Group and Year										
	Accredited†				Non-Accredited‡				Total	
	First Attempt		Retake		First Attempt		Retake		First Attempts and Retakes	
Year	N	% Fail	N	% Fail	N	% Fail	N	% Fail	N	% Fail
2020	231	9.5	2	0.0	14	57.1	1	100.0	248	12.5
2021	97	5.2	10	30.0	9	11.1	6	66.7	122	10.7
2022	52	21.2	5	40.0	6	0.0	2	50.0	65	21.5
2023	71	9.9	2	0.0	11	45.5	0	0.0	84	14.3
2024	53	11.3	5	0.0	9	22.2	3	33.3	70	12.9
2025	54	9.3	2	50.0	3	33.3	2	50.0	61	13.1

† Indicates candidates educated by dental education programs accredited by CODA.
‡ Indicates candidates educated by dental education programs not accredited by CODA. Failure rates for this group should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size present.

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

Responses to House of Delegates Resolutions

The Commission did not receive any assignments from the 2025 ADA House of Delegates.

Policy Review

While the Commission is an agency of the ADA, it maintains its own independent policies and procedures, reviewing these on an annual basis. Any noteworthy changes are indicated in prior areas of this annual report.

Commission Minutes

For more information on recent activities, see the Commission's minutes on ADA.org.