



COMMUNITY
HEALTH CARE
ASSOCIATION
of New York State

The Future of the Dental Workforce: Building Partnerships and Pathways

Part 2: In-House Dental Assistant Training Programs and Career Ladders in Health Centers

Monday, May 12th, 2025

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National Network for Oral Health Access

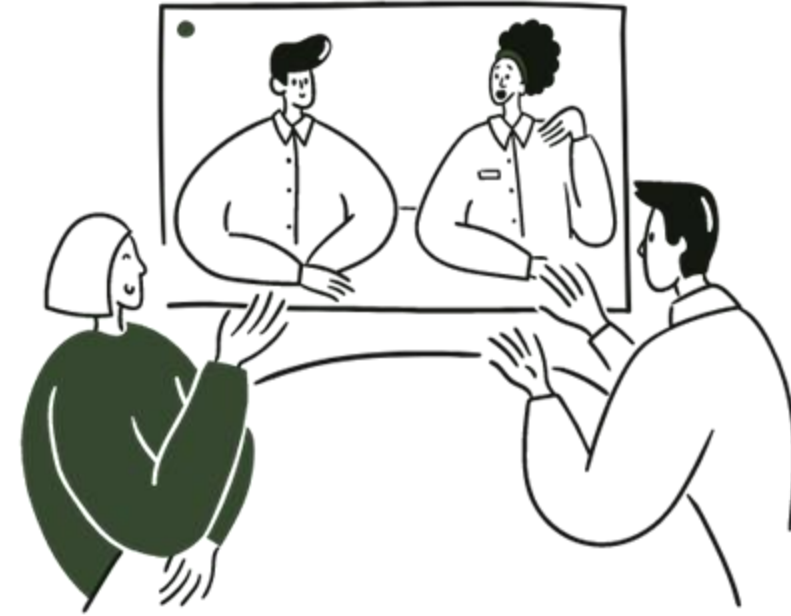
And a practical example presented by Dr. Gregory Maddalena, DDS, CDO
Co-Chair CHCANYS Oral Health Subcommittee
Sun River Health



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Housekeeping

- Participants have been muted to prevent background noise.
- Use the chat box to type questions during the webinar.
- This webinar is being recorded and will soon be available to all participants along with a copy of the slides.
- A webinar evaluation will be shared with participants after the session.



About NNOHA

- Founded in 1991 by FQHC Dental Directors who identified a need for peer-to-peer networking, collaboration, research, and support
- Membership now includes more than 5,500 dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, supporters, and partners



HRSA National Training and Technical Assistance Partner



Learning Collaboratives



NNOHA Listserv



Annual Conference



NNOHA Oral Health
Leadership Institute
(NOHLI)



Webinars and on-demand
learning



Resources: publications,
dental forms library,
promising practices, and
more!

Visit nnoha.org or email info@nnoha.org



Objectives

Describe in-house dental assistant (DA) training programs in health centers.

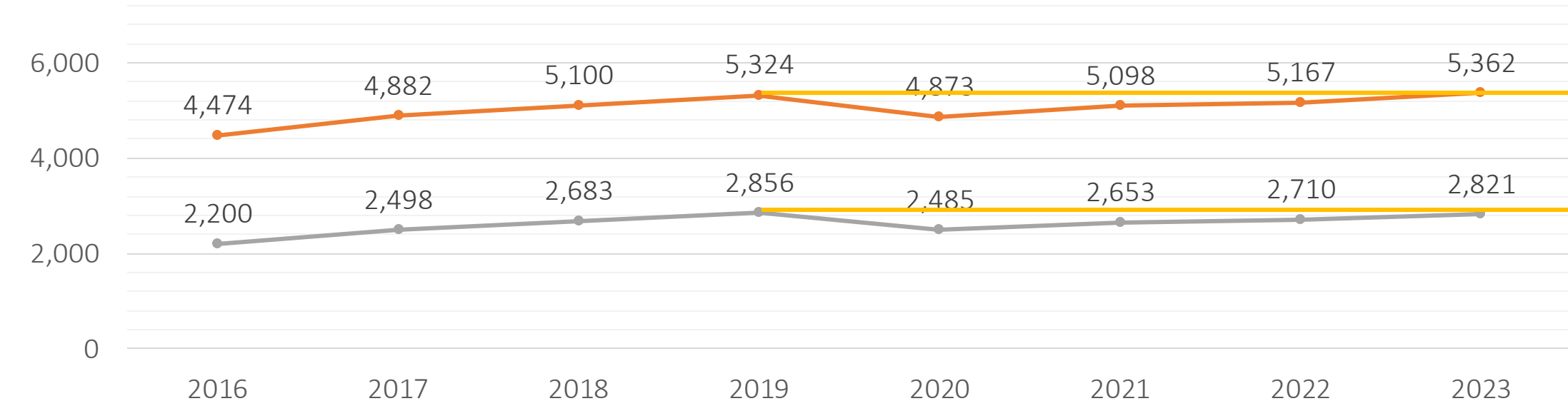
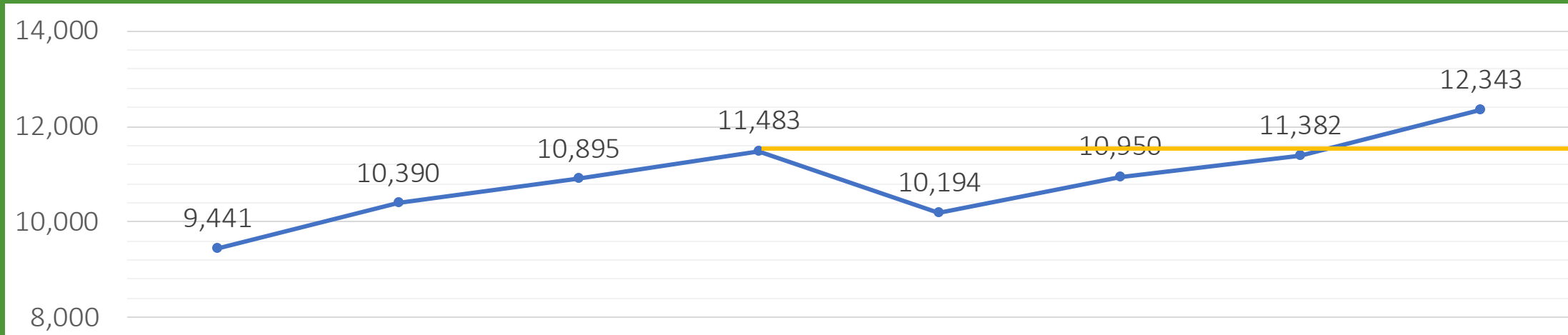
Explain the current landscape of the DA workforce.

Share strategies to implement in-house DA training programs and career development opportunities in health centers.

Sun River Health Training Case Study



Dental FTEs in Health Centers (National Level)

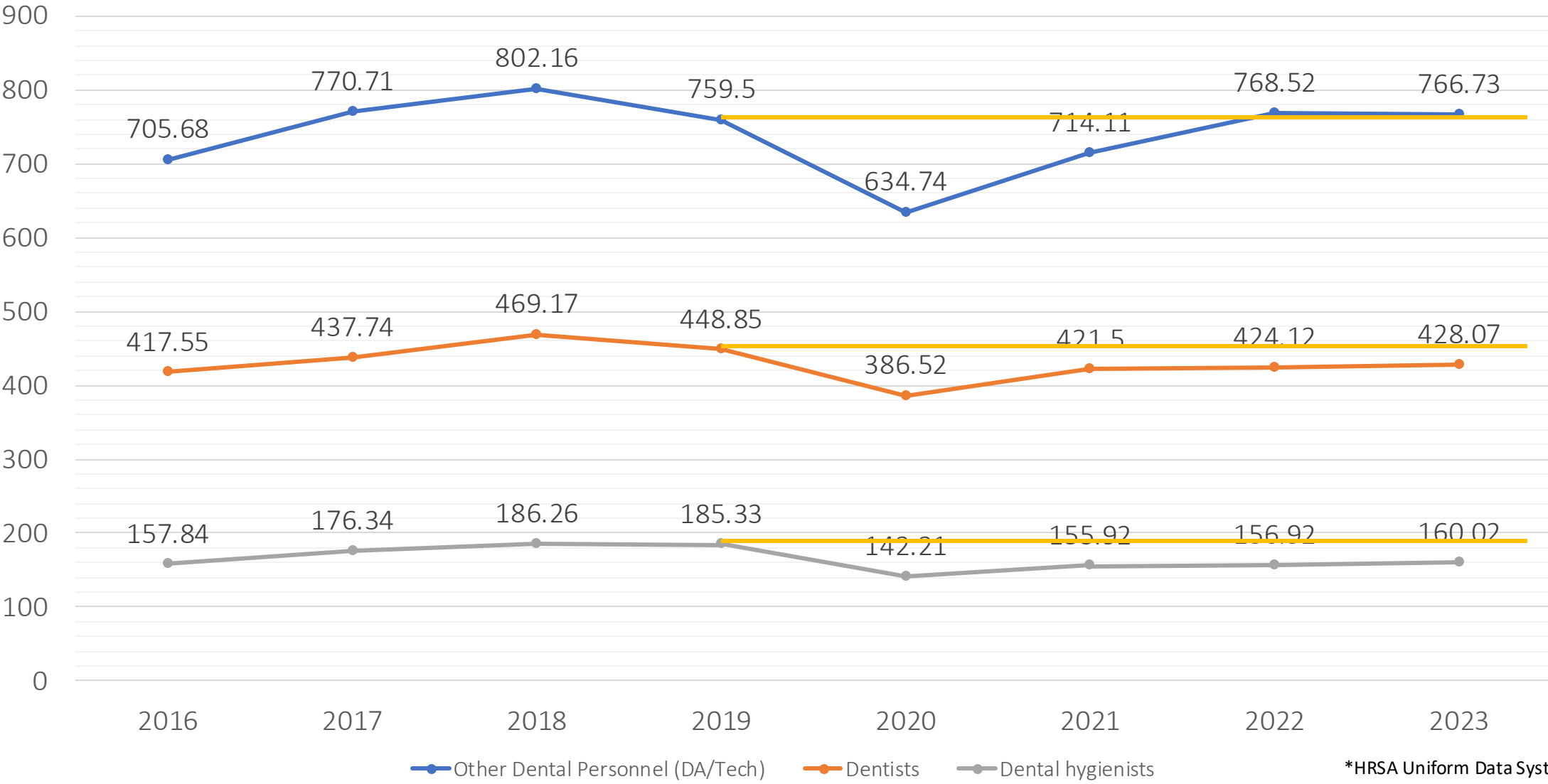


Other Dental Personnel (DA/Tech) Dentists Dental hygienists

*HRSA Uniform Data System 2023:
Dental FTEs in Health Centers



Dental FTEs in New York State Health Centers



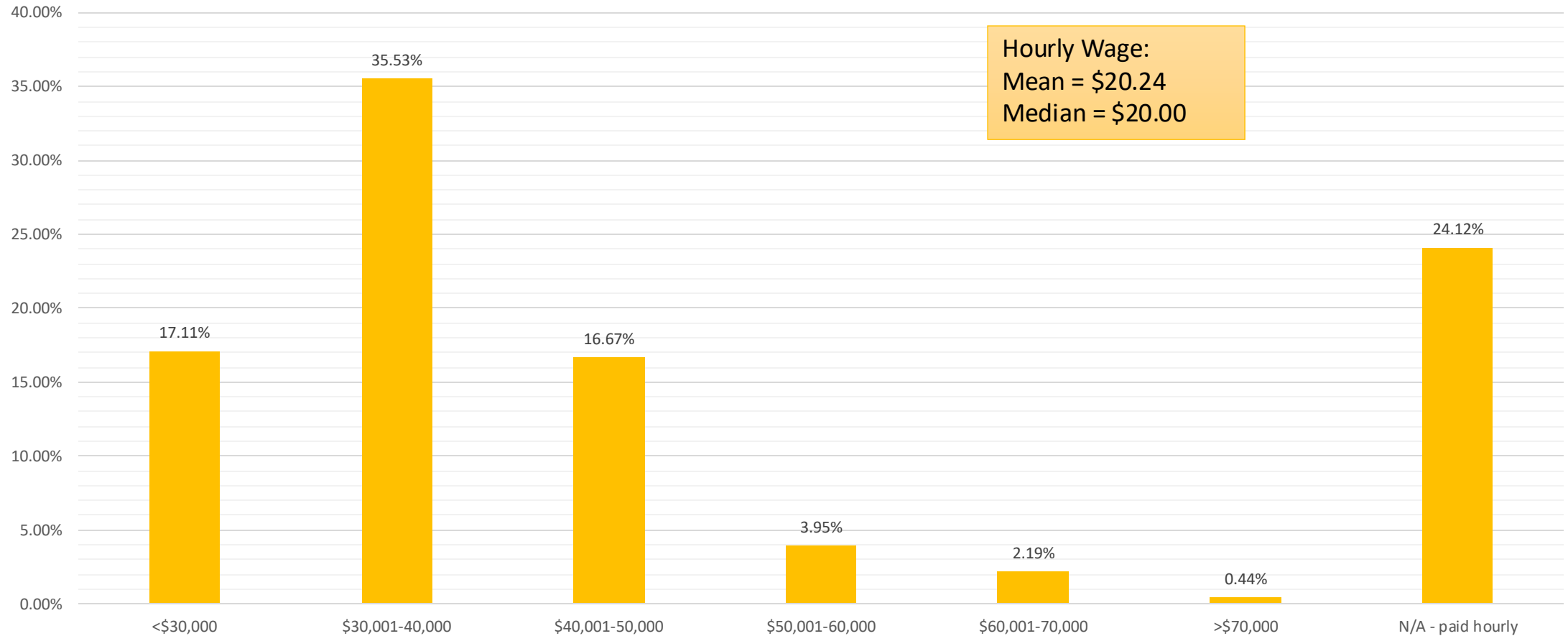
*HRSA Uniform Data System 2023:
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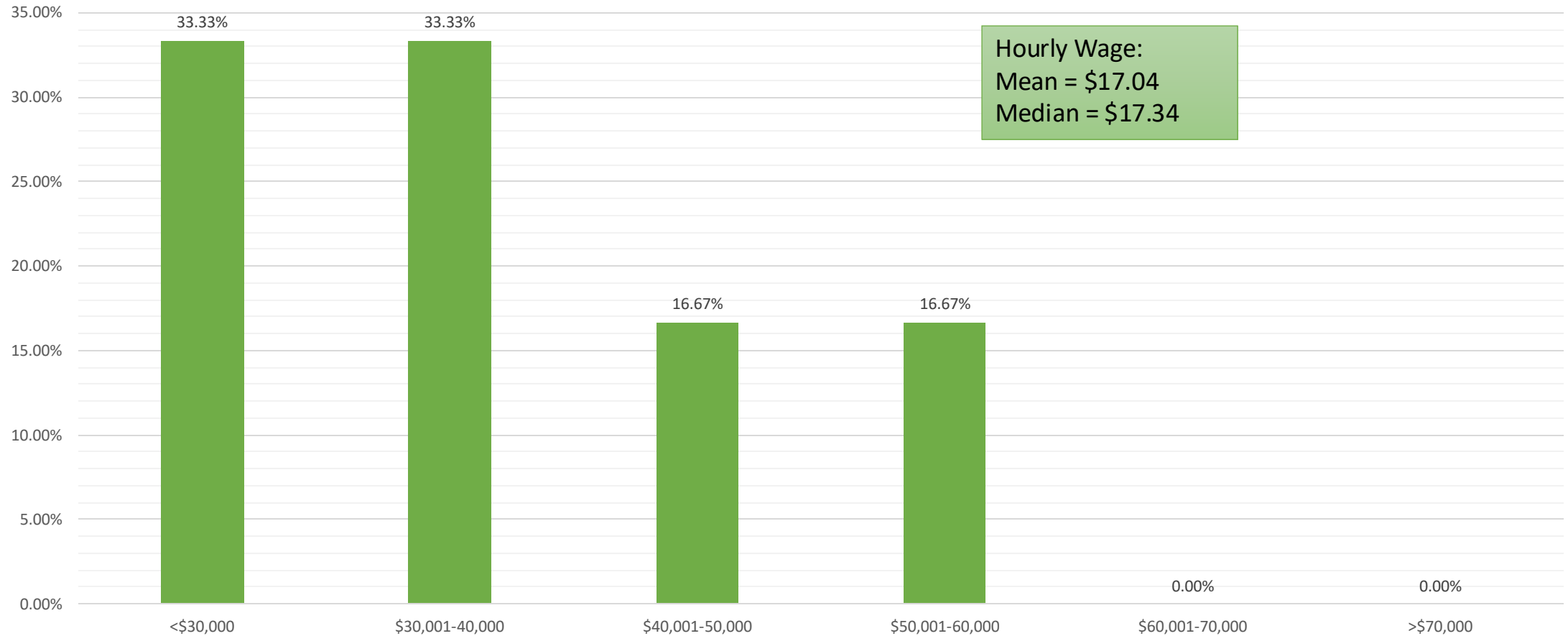
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NNOHA Workforce Survey (2023)

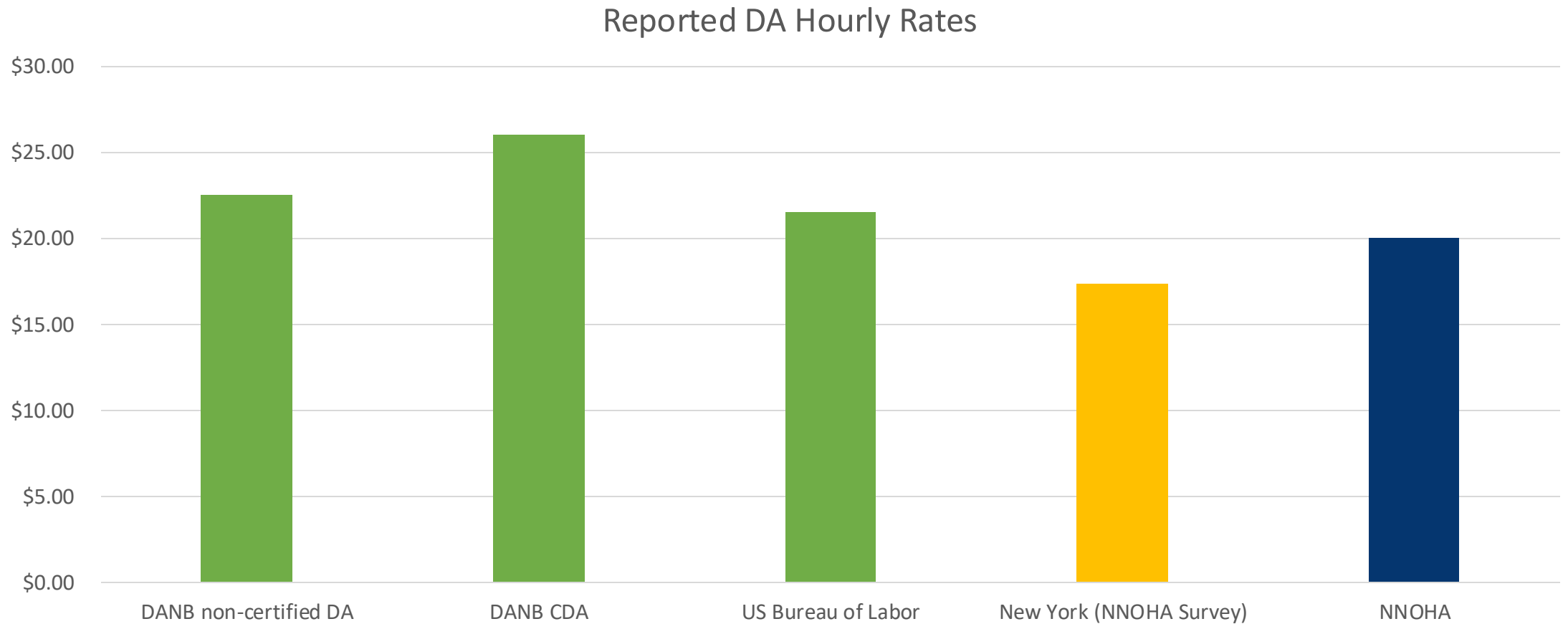
Current Salary: Dental Assistants (DA) National Level



Current Salary: Dental Assistants (DA) New York



Comparison of Median DA Salaries



Benefits for DAs in CHCs Nationwide (2023)

Benefit	Mean	Median
Vacation days	16 days	14 days
Sick days	5 days	4 days
Continuing education reimbursement	\$613.45 per year	\$35.12 per year

DAs receive far less in continuing education reimbursement compared to dental hygienists and dentists (over \$1,000 less per year). 48% of DAs say they do not receive any type of continuing education reimbursement.

Over 52% of DAs say that the number of vacation and sick days is inadequate.



Intent to Leave the Health Center (2023)

- Dental assistants (DA) were significantly associated with intent to leave the health center in the next 5 years.*
- DAs are 1.39 times more likely to leave a health center in the next 5 years.
- Intent to leave was significantly associated with the number of dental assistants employed.*
- Intent to leave was significantly associated with the quality of dental assistants employed.*
- Intent to leave was significantly associated with inadequate dental assistant ratios.*

*p-value <0.05



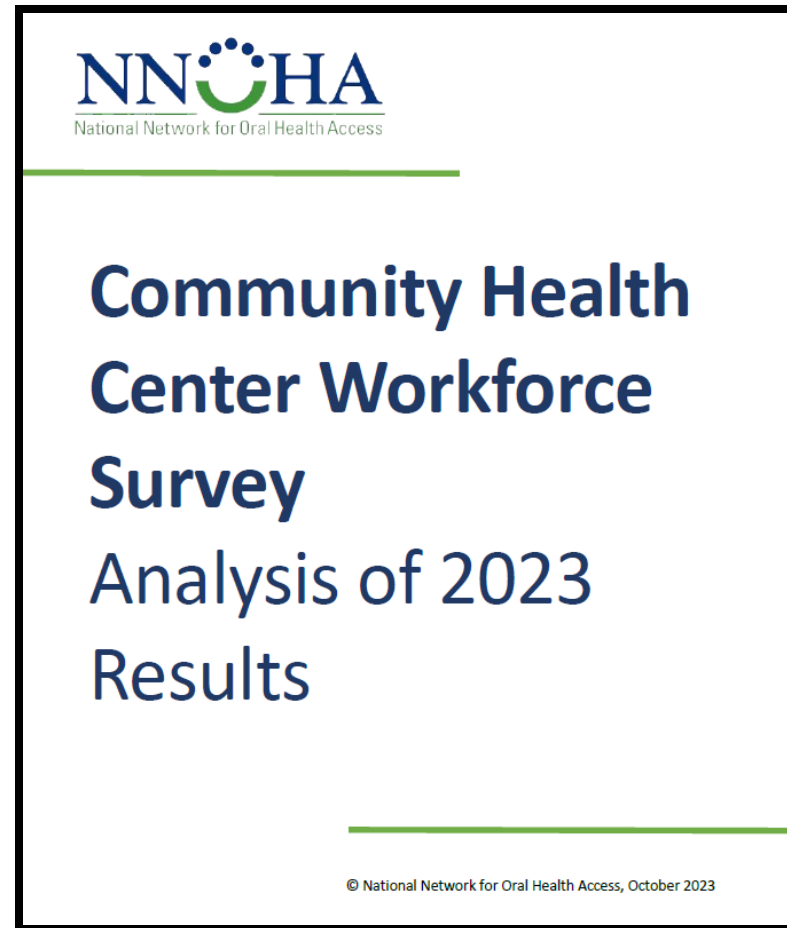
Download NNOHA's Workforce Survey



[Access the document here](#)

or

scan the QR code!



Additional resources on Workforce Recruitment and Retention are available on [NNOHA's website.](#)



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NNOHA Dental Assistant Needs Assessment

Results (National Level)

- 781 responses
- 74% of dental leaders report a DA shortage
 - Lack of applicants
 - Salary and benefits
- 60% of DAs report moderate to severe burnout
- 70% of DAs intend to stay at their health center
- **22% of health centers have a formal in-house DA training program**



Training Programs Can...

- Enhance recruitment and retention strategies
- Engage community members and improve partnerships with the community
- Optimize capacity, education, and workforce in the community
- Increase patient-centered care and culturally appropriate care by including learners from the community



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Planning Considerations

Identify the Need

- What is your current DA to Dentist ratio?
 - NNOHA recommends 2:1
- What local DA training options are in your service area?
- Do new DA hires often need more training?
- What are your state's training requirements for entry-level DAs?



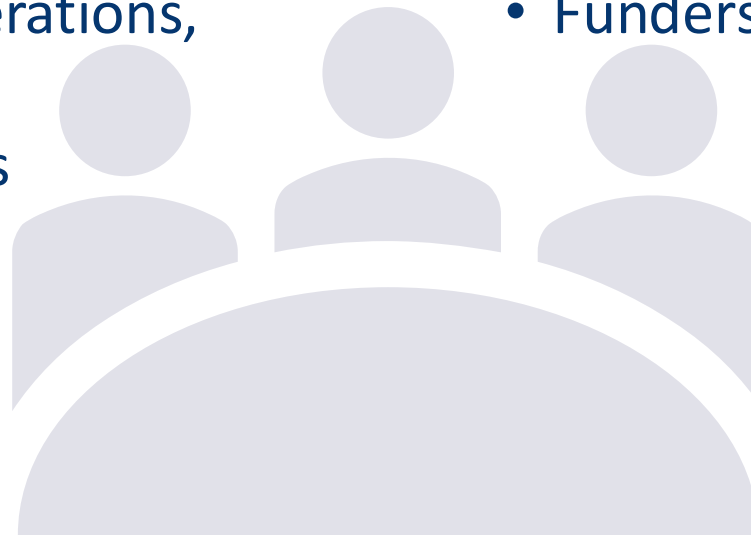
Engage Key Stakeholders

- Internal Stakeholders

- Executives
- Board of Directors
- Dental assistants
- Other support (IT, operations, marketing)
- Dental team members

- External Stakeholders

- Partner organizations
- Regional certifying boards
- Local DA training programs
- Funders



Select Training Leaders and Trainers

- Identify team members that will lead the training program and serve as faculty
- These folks typically have...
 - Background in dental assisting
 - Program management/teaching experience
 - Passion for DA profession and growing new leaders

*Health centers report increased satisfaction and morale to serve as trainers.



Develop a Budget

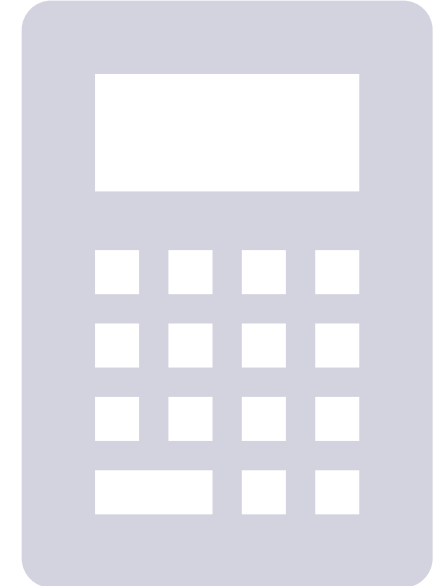
- Potential expenses

- Teaching materials (textbooks, clinical equipment, supplies, mannequins/typodonts)
- Salary and personnel costs
- Certification courses

- Sources of funding

- Local or state grants
- Donations
- Trainee fees and costs
- Organizational budget

*Some expenses are likely to be a one-time investment



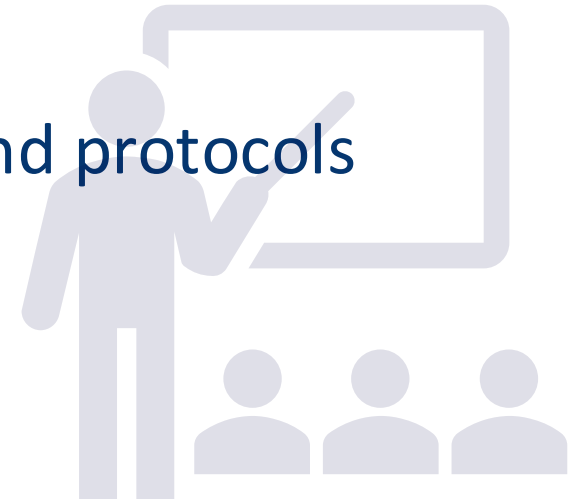
Conduct a Revenue vs. Cost Analysis

- In some situations, the revenue generated from patient visits by each dental assistant pays for the program and contributes to overall revenue growth.



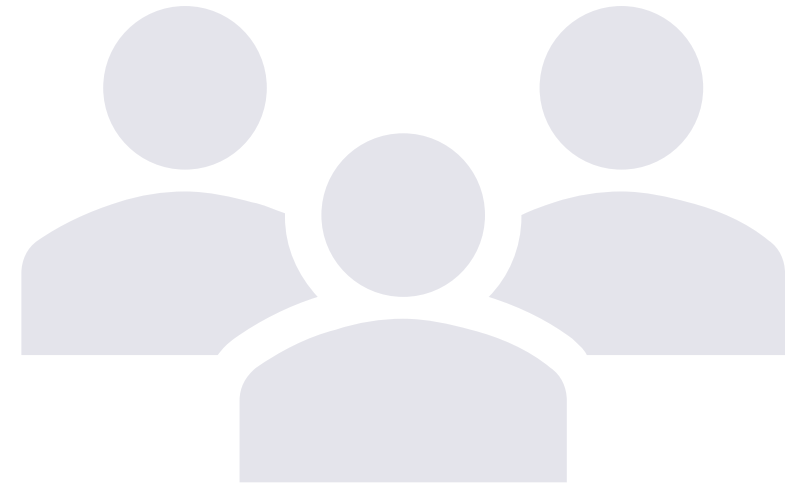
Train the Trainers

- Many trainers do not have formal training in teaching DAs, but have informal DA training experience
- Trainers can receive additional certifications or continuing education
- Trainers should be aware of health center policies and protocols



Create Training Requirements

- Develop requirements for the trainees to participate in the program
- Possible requirements:
 - 18+ years of age
 - High school diploma/GED
 - Eligible to work in the U.S.
 - Mission/community service driven
 - Ambition and aptitude
 - Basic understanding of DA responsibilities



Develop Recruitment Strategies

- Determine how you will recruit and promote the DA training program to the community and organization
- Internal recruitment – recruit team members interested in dental assisting
- External recruitment – digital ads, social media, community promotion, patient recruitment



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Program Design Recommendations

Common Program Schedule Models

Phased coursework

- Phase 1: didactic coursework (books, videos, labs)
- Phase 2: clinical experience (shadowing, assisting with trainer)

Integrated coursework

- Didactic and clinical activities run together either by:
- Alternating by days/weeks OR running both activities each day

One training program cycle may run anywhere from one week to two years (avg 4-6 weeks)



Design curriculum

Infection prevention and control

- **Highest and earliest priority**
- Labs
- Shadowing
- Videos
- Books
- Online trainings

Radiology

- Manikins
- Shadowing
- Videos

Procedures

- Most variable
- Shadowing
- Videos
- Labs
- Books

Electronic dental record

- Shadowing
- Labs
- Participation in clinic-wide electronic health record training

Patient management

- Shadowing
- Videos

Follow state or regional policies and procedures!



Subject Areas



Dental office management, operations, HIPAA, policies



Patient management – interpersonal communication



Anatomy and oral conditions



Electronic health records, data collection and recording



Dental materials



Medical emergencies



Radiology



Infection prevention and control – dental safety



Instrument processing and sterilization



Hands-On Components

- Provides real-life experience to learners
- Determine a minimum number of hours of clinical experience (check state regulations, 8 hours is common)
- Clinical hours includes:
 - Chairside experience
 - Handwashing, PPE
 - Infection Prevention and Control
 - Radiology
 - Laboratory experience
 - Front office observation
 - Sterilization and instrument processing
 - CPR/BLS



Training Settings

- Consider location for training
- Didactic training can take place in many settings
- Internal health center characteristics that may be helpful:
 - Multiple sites or extra operatories used only for training
 - Operatories with identical layouts
 - Flexible/wide range of hours to use facilities



Recruiting Trainees



Create positive environments during the training program



Offer career growth opportunities



Discuss hiring and future opportunities with trainees towards the end of the program



Other strategies for recruitment:

Trainees pay a fee to participate in the training program

Establish employment contract clauses (if permissible)

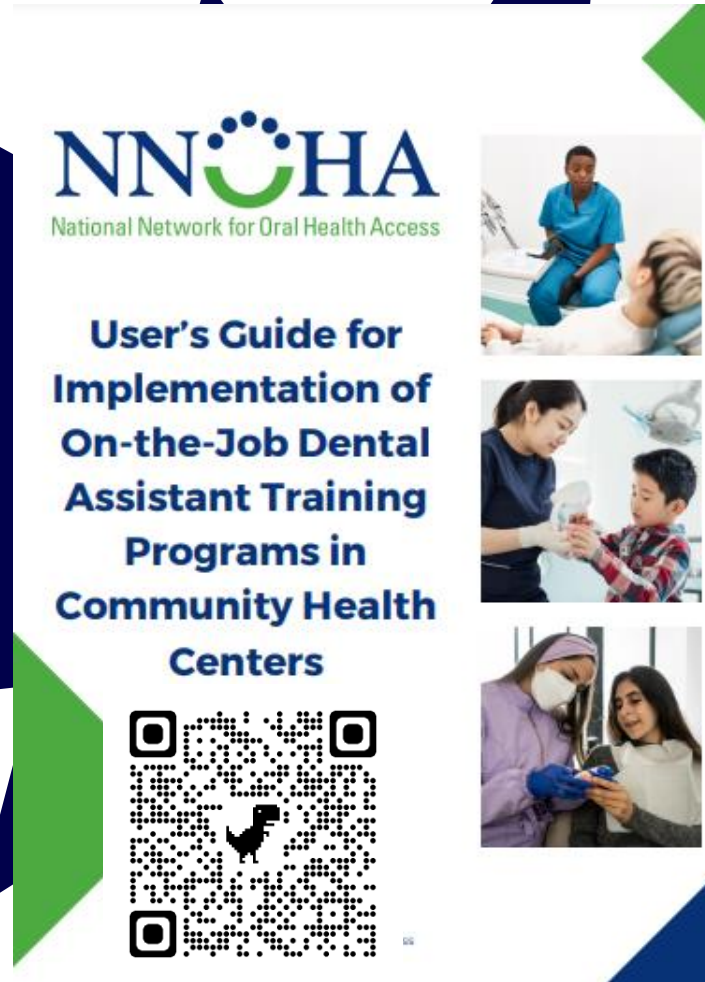


Competencies and Evaluation

- Determine how to evaluate competency of trainees
 - Quizzes, exams, observation
 - 30-60-90 day reviews
 - Require completion of regional/national examinations
- Conduct program evaluation
 - Satisfaction surveys from trainers and trainees
 - Document recruitment/retention of DA trainees
 - Competency assessments
 - Demographic information



Gives strategies and
recommendations for
**implementing in-house DA
training programs**



Professional Development for DAs

Consider long-term plans to develop high-quality DAs and promote career development

- Additional training opportunities (certifications, etc.)
 - [National Entry Level DA \(NELDA\)](#) exam
 - [Dental Infection Prevention and Control Certificate](#)
- Radiology exams, certifications, etc.
- Expanded function dental assistant



Why Create Career Ladders?

Improves
recruitment of new
DAs

- Candidates recognize opportunities for growth and salary improvement

Increases retention
of existing DAs

- Offers opportunity to grow within the organization
- Salary improvement

Enhances patient
care experience

- Increased competence of dental team
- Opportunity to improve knowledge and skills, improving patient experience



Dental Assistant Curriculum (Salud family health center):

Orientation	Apprentice	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
DSS.001	DSS.002	DSS.003	LEAD.101	MGMT.101	MGMT.201
REQUIRED			OPTIONAL		
1) Dental EHR 2) Introduction to Dental Radiology 3) Dental Chair-side Procedures Pt 1 4) Dental Instruments & Equipment Pt 1 5) Medication Management 6) Dental Office Procedures 7) Dental Assistant Clinical Training	1) Basic Dental Terminology 2) Dental Patient Management & Communication 3) Dental Nitrous Oxide 4) Dental Chairside Procedure 2 5) Dental Emergency Triage 6) Dental Instruments & Equipment Pt 2 7) Universal Precautions for the Dental Assistant 8) Dental Radiology Techniques & Applications	1) Dental Laboratory Skills -Pt 1 2) Dental Ethics and Professional Conduct 3) Advanced Dental Radiology 4) Dental Management of the Medically Complex Patient 5) Advanced Dental Terminology 6) Dental Materials 7) Hypertension QM 8) AMT Exam Preparation 9)AMT Exam	1) Healthy Communication 2) Moving From Peer To Supervisor 3) Stress And Time Management 4) Giving And Receiving Criticism/Feedback 5) Time Management 6) Managing Up 7) Employment Law 8) Barriers to Effective Communication 9) Leading a Team	1) What it takes to Manage 2) Introduction to Management 3) Character and Management Styles 4) The Coaching Habit 5) Ethics for Managers 6) Conflict De-Escalation Techniques 7) Emotional Intelligence 8) Becoming a Competent Leader: Creative Thinking and Problem Solving 9) Steps to Remove Yourself from Drama at Work 10) Coaching Skills for Leaders and Managers	CAPSTONE PROJECT

Additional Resources

- [NNOHA Dental Assistant Training Resources](#)
- [User's Guide for the Implementation of DA Training Programs](#)
- NNOHA Dental Assistant Workforce Learning Collaborative
 - Next cohort begins recruitment in November 2025, email denae@nnoha.org if you're interested!



See you in San Antonio!

NNOHA 2025

Remember the dates...

November 9–12, 2025



Contact Us!



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Strategic Partnerships
candace@nnoha.org



Sun River Health: Efforts to Increase Access to Oral Health

Presenter: Dr. Gregory Maddalena, DDS, CDO, Co-Chair CHCANYS Oral Health Subcommittee

Danielle Grundig, RDH, CRCST, Director of Dental Operations & Infection Prevention

Lisa Gali Lisa Galli, eLearning Manager

Darrell Tillman , MBA, TTI DISC Certified, Vice President of Human Resources, Professional Development, Compensation and Benefits

SRH Dental Crisis

- Critical vacancies of Dental staff
- Decrease Capacity – Critical Access to Oral Health
- **DENTAL PATIENTS AND CAPACITY CONCERN**

SRH Focus on Dental Assistants (DAs)

There are two types of DAs defined by NYS Dental Board:

1. “Four Handed Dental Assistant” – Doctor Always Present
2. “Registered Dental Assistant” – More Independent
 - Requires Educational Program
 - One Year Academic Program
 - Alternative Course of Study: Biomedical Science (including clinical content) or Dental Assisting Course by Degree Granting Institution including at least 1,000 Clinical Hours
 - Exams: DANB, New York State's three-part exam which consists of New York Professional Dental Assisting (NYPDA) Exam, Radiation Health and Safety (RHS) Exam and Infection Control (ICE) Exam

Immediate Need – Immediate Solution

- 4 Handed Dental Assistants
- Quickest Route – Training Not Specifically Outlined By NYS
- Assess existing DAs for registration eligibility -trainers

Four Handed DA Training Program

SRH's Preferred Plan:

- ☐ Need To Complete While Working
- ☐ Cost Effective (For example: Career Step: \$2,700 per person and Penn Foster: \$1,000 per person)
- ☐ Additional partnership consideration: Department of Labor Apprenticeship

Community Health Center (CHC) DA Trainee Considerations:

- Recruitment: CHC to cover cost of education
- Retention: Agreement/Payback/Career Ladder

Dental Assistant Trainee:
Existing Dental Assistants
or External Candidate
(non-registered)

**Four Handed
Dental Assistant**

Registered DA Trainee

- Academic Partnership
- SRH Cost Of DANB and Registration
- Develop CHC Internal Program

Registered
Dental
Assistant

Registered Floater/Trainer

- 4 Per Region
- Aid With Training (need for all scenarios)

Long Term Opportunity

- ☐ There are no formal requirements for 4 handed dental assistant training courses, thus, programs can develop their own content.
- ☐ Continuing researching program certification through the state –or- partnership with an academic institution.
- ☐ Develop in-house training
- ☐ Initial experience with paid courses and expertise of the department lead and HR could be leveraged for opportunity for content creation.

Grant Opportunities for the Oral Health Workforce

Immediate Plan

1. Immediately Fund Four Handed Dental Assistant Trainee Positions
2. Learn more about the DOL apprenticeship programs/requirements
3. Assess eligibility of existing staff for trainers

Long Term Plan - Phased

1. Registration for trainers/existing staff
2. Research Options For State Approved Education
3. SRH Content
4. Hudson Valley Community College
5. Fund Exams and Registration

Questions?



You will be forwarded to the survey once the webinar ends.
You will also receive the link in a follow-up email or you can scan below!

Please fill out our evaluation survey!



Completing your survey helps us to provide relevant and helpful information.
Thank you in advance!





Thank you!

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