



New Dental Assistant Survival Guide

You passed your boards. Now what? Everything you need to know about your first days on the job, expanded functions, CE, and how to build a career you love — from licensed dental pros.

New Dental Assistants

Recent DANB Grads

Dental Students

Your First 30 Days: A Survival Checklist

Starting a new job in dentistry is exciting — and overwhelming. Here's what to do first.

■ Week 1 — Get Established

- ✓ Submit your DA permit application to the Oklahoma Board of Dentistry within 30 days of hire.
- ✓ Get your BLS/CPR certification — your employer needs it, and every expanded function requires it.
- ✓ Shadow every provider: dentist, hygienist, and office staff. Learn names and roles.
- ✓ Memorize sterilization and infection control protocols — you'll do this every single day.
- ✓ Learn where everything is: instruments, supplies, X-ray equipment, and the lab.
- ✓ Ask to shadow X-rays being taken even before you're certified — learn the workflow early.

■ Week 2–4 — Learn the Flow

- ✓ Study your state's dental practice act. Know exactly what you are and are not allowed to do.
- ✓ Practice charting: learn procedure codes, tooth numbering systems, and how notes are written.
- ✓ Get comfortable with tray setups for common procedures: exams, fillings, extractions, cleanings.
- ✓ Ask your dentist about enrolling in Radiation Safety (X-ray) training — most offices need this fast.
- ✓ Review infection control standards: OSHA bloodborne pathogens, sharps disposal, and PPE.
- ✓ Find out which expanded functions your office wants you to pursue — plan your path early.

■ PRO TIP

The best dental assistants ask questions — relentlessly.

Every experienced team member was once exactly where you are. Ask what, why, and how — you'll earn respect faster than any certification.

■ Oklahoma DA Permit Required:

As of November 1, 2025, all Oklahoma dental assistants must hold a permit before working chairside. Apply within 30 days of hire.

Expanded Functions — Your Career Ladder

What they are, how to get them, and which to pursue first.



Expanded functions are specific clinical procedures you're legally permitted to perform after completing a board-approved course and obtaining a state permit. They raise your value, increase your pay, and open doors in virtually every dental practice you'll ever work in.

■ Oklahoma Expanded Functions — In Order

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■ Radiation Safety (X-Ray)

Your first and most essential certification. Most offices won't hire without it. Complete a board-approved course and apply for your OBD permit.

■ Start here — Week 1 or 2

2

■ Coronal Polishing

Lets you perform rubber-cup polishing after scaling. Minimum 14 hours with a hands-on clinical component required. Most in-demand expanded function in Oklahoma.

■ Month 1–3 on the job

3

■ Sealant Placement

Apply pit-and-fissure sealants to protect teeth. Huge demand in pediatric and general practices. **IMPORTANT:** You must hold the Coronal Polishing permit first — no exceptions.

■ After Coronal Polish permit

4

■ Nitrous Oxide Monitoring

Assist in the administration and monitoring of nitrous oxide. Highly valued in any practice that offers sedation. Requires a board-approved course and its own permit.

■ Month 6–12 on the job

■ How CE Works in Oklahoma

Dental Assistants

- 2 hrs / 2-year period
- Topic: Infection Control
- No online cap stated
- Renew by Dec 31 each year
- OMS permit holders: 8 hrs

What "Board-Approved" Means

- Any ADA CERP or AGD PACE course
- Must relate to patient care
- Live CPR counts toward total
- Interactive webinars may count
- Log everything in CE Broker

Expanded Function CE

- Each course counts as CE hours
- OBD-approved course = OBD credit
- Certificate issued same day
- Apply for permit after course
- Permit ≠ Completion Certificate

■ The Permit Is What Makes It Legal

Completing a course is only step one. You **CANNOT** legally perform an expanded function until your permit is issued by the OBD and reflects on your official permit record. Apply immediately after course completion.

CODA Grad Shortcut:

If you graduated from a CODA-accredited dental assisting program, you automatically receive ALL expanded duty permits when your DA application is approved.

Your 12-Month Action Plan

Study smart. Get certified. Grow your career.



12-Month Certification Timeline

Month 1	Month 1	Month 1-2	Month 2-3	Month 4-6	Month 6-12	Ongoing
WEEK 1: Apply for OBD DA permit within 30 days of hire.	WEEK 2: Get BLS/CPR certification (live, hands-on AHA or equiv.)	ENROLL: Radiation Safety (X-ray) — your first expanded function.	ENROLL: Coronal Polishing — 14 hrs, hands-on clinical training.	ENROLL: Sealant Placement — 12 hrs (must have Polish permit first).	ENROLL: Nitrous Oxide Monitoring — completes your core set.	CE: Log infection control CE (2 hrs / 2-yr period) in CE Broker.

What to Study on Your Own

Clinical Foundations

- Tooth numbering (Universal, Palmer, FDI)
- Basic procedure tray setups
- Instrument identification & function
- Dental charting symbols & codes
- Suction techniques & patient positioning

Infection Control

- OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard
- Sterilization cycles & spore testing
- PPE donning/doffing procedures
- Sharps handling & disposal
- Surface disinfection protocols

Radiology Fundamentals

- Paralleling vs. bisecting-angle technique
- X-ray safety: ALARA principle
- Periapical, bitewing, panoramic films
- Recognizing common radiographic errors
- Radiation safety regulations in Oklahoma

Dental Procedures

- Composite vs. amalgam restorations
- Crown preparation & temporization
- Extraction protocol & post-op care
- Pediatric procedures & behavior management
- Emergency management: vasovagal syncope

EXPANDED FUNCTIONS = HIGHER PAY

Basic DA \$14–\$18/hr	+ Radiation Safety \$16–\$20/hr	+ Coronal Polishing \$18–\$23/hr	+ Sealants & Nitrous \$21–\$28/hr
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* Estimated Oklahoma market rates as of 2025. Actual pay varies by practice, location, and experience.

READY TO GET CERTIFIED?

Learn Today comes to your dental office.

We teach Radiation Safety, Coronal Polishing, Sealant Placement, Nitrous Oxide, CPR/BLS, and OSHA Compliance — all OBD-approved, all in your own office.

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"The dental professionals who grow fastest are the ones who pursue their certifications early — and never stop learning. You've already taken the first step."

— Brook Gibson, RDH · Learn Today Dental Education