



# MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS ADVISING GUIDE: *Associate in Science in Dental Assisting*

The **Associate in Science Degree in Dental Assisting** program is designed to prepare students to be competent dental professionals who assist the dentist chairside during the various procedures performed in the dental environment. The program provides the knowledge and skills necessary to perform supportive assisting procedures, supportive care to patients, laboratory procedures and basic office management procedures. The program is designed to offer the students a program that follows the high standards proposed by ADA/CODA, ADEA, ADAA, OSHA, CDC, and the General Laws of Massachusetts pertinent to the State Practice Act, promulgated by the Board of Registration in Dentistry. Graduates are prepared to sit for the Dental Assisting National Board Exams.



This advising guide includes information that will help you explore your academic and career interests and determine whether the **Associate in Science Degree in Dental Assisting major** will support your long-term goals. term goals.



## EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS WITH ACADEMIC ADVISING

Throughout each semester, meet with your advisor so that he/she can guide you through a self-exploration process that will help you identify your academic and career interests.

### Beginning of Semester:

- \_\_\_ Schedule an appointment to meet with your academic advisor during the first few weeks to discuss future plans and how a **Dental Assisting degree** can help you achieve your goals.
- \_\_\_ Explore your personal interests by completing Focus2, an online career assessment tool:  
<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/careerservices/focus2.aspx>

### Mid-Semester:

- \_\_\_ Schedule an appointment with academic advisor review your academic progress, Focus2 results and create an academic plan in DegreeWorks.

### Before Semester Ends:

- \_\_\_ Schedule an appointment to discuss and register for the classes you will take the following semester. (Early November for spring, Early April for fall and summer)
- \_\_\_ Visit the Academic Career & Transfer Center or call 1-800-818-3434 to schedule an appointment.

## ► INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- Exploring Your Options
- Personality Inventory
- Career Path
- Transfer Path

## DENTAL ASSISTING PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Graduates of the program are prepared to:

- To enter the workforce as an entry-level dental assistant with the knowledge and technical skills needed to be successful while assisting a dentist in any dental environment;
- To communicate professionally and effectively with patients, employers and colleagues;
- To accurately record dental/medical data into a dental record and/or chart;
- To provide care to patients with empathy;
- To practice within the legal and ethical frameworks of the Dental Assisting Profession;
- To accept the responsibility for professional growth by participating in continuing education and membership in the American Dental Assistants Association;
- Use knowledge acquired at MCC as a foundation for continued study and/or practical application;
- Interpret and analyze information in order to engage in critical thinking and problem solving;
- Communicate, use information, and employ technology effectively;
- Communicate an understanding of the world from a global perspective;
- Demonstrate social responsibility within the college community;
- Demonstrate the capacity for on-going personal and professional development.



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**DENTAL ASSISTING SELF-EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:**

*Would I make a good Dental Assistant?*

This inventory will allow you to assess whether the Dental Assisting Degree fits your personality. When complete, consult the grading scale at the end. Answer true or false to the following statements:

#	QUESTION	TRUE	FALSE
1.	I enjoy helping people.		
2.	I pay attention to details and follow instructions, exactly.		
3.	When someone gives me information, I listen for a few seconds and then I drift off. I can always ask someone later.		
4.	I am always prepared for classes.		
5.	I find it hard to keep a really good secret.		
6.	I am able to listen to music and study at the same time.		
7.	I am able to make effective decisions in stressful situations.		
8.	I am comfortable holding worms.		
9.	If you looked at my handouts from class, you would see them all organized in a binder.		
10.	I find taking two tests in different subjects on the same day at school challenging.		
11.	I get queasy when I see blood.		
12.	I enjoy being a part of a team sport.		
13.	I never like working on group projects, I prefer to work on my own.		
14.	I have no problem at following strict rules and guidelines.		
15.	I would not mind putting my hands in a stranger's mouth.		
16.	I get frustrated and give up if I can't figure things out after a few minutes.		
17.	I find science challenging.		
18.	I work well with my hands.		
19.	I am often the one to volunteer to be on the clean-up crew after a get-together.		
20.	I want to finish school, get a good job, and never have to study again.		

Grading the Quiz: Questions 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19: Give yourself 1 point for every answer that you answered TRUE; 0 points for every question that you answered FALSE.

Questions 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 20: Give yourself 1 point for every answer that you answered FALSE; 0 points for every question that you answered TRUE

If you scored between: \_\_\_0-10: You should think seriously about whether or not this is the right profession for you. Talk to some dental assistants to see what they like about their jobs and what they dislike about their jobs.

\_\_\_11-20: This could be a good profession for you to choose.



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### IS THE ASSOCIATE IN SCIENCE DEGREE IN DENTAL ASSISTING THE RIGHT FIT FOR ME?

Think about whether you have the following personality traits that dental assistants must possess:

■ **Ability to converse professionally with people**

Most dental assistants see a diverse population of patients every day. Very often these patients are under stress, worrying about what the dentist is discovering or doing about their oral health, are you the type of person who can remain calm while another person is anxious? Can you keep a smile on your face when another is worried or scared?

■ **Ability to be a team player**

Everyone in a dental practice works together for the good of the patient. Do you do well on projects when working with a partner? Can you delegate tactfully? Most dental assistants work with a lot of different people while doing their jobs, are you the type of person who can be a team player? Are you willing to do another's job if it is needed or willing to take on other duties in order to help another get out early? Are you discreet and willing to honor another's private business?

■ **Ability to pay attention to detail and be self-directed**

Dental assistants need to thoroughly look over a patient's medical history and treatment plan to know what needs to be done. Dental assistants must stay focused on the procedure being performed in order to anticipate the needs of the dentist and the patient so that the procedure goes smoothly and timely. The dental assistant must be able to set out in advance all the materials needed for a procedure before the patient has been seated, so when the dentist sits down, they are ready to go. Do you check to make sure that you have all the ingredients for the recipe before you begin? Do you look at life from many angles? Do you double check your spelling before you send a note? Do you look around your bedroom before you leave it to make sure everything is in its place? Are you easily distracted?

■ **Ability to work under pressure**

Dental assistants must be able to set up and break down a room quickly in order to keep the pace in the office. Dental assistants are always under the scrutiny of the dentist, as well as the patients, will you be able to keep the pace throughout every procedure and still be able to provide comfort to the patient? Can you complete a task within a short period of time? Can you take direction and not lose your cool? Can you pick up the pace when you need to? Do you always have an excuse when you are late to work or can't complete a task? Are you level-headed?

■ **Ability to act honestly**

Dental assistants must have integrity. They must be honest to themselves and know the limitations of what is allowed for dental assistants to do under Massachusetts Law in a dental practice. It is a dental assistant's duty to be knowledgeable and skilled when performing any procedure. Do you say anything to get out of a situation? Do you cave under pressure? Are you quick to lay blame?

■ **Ability to stay organized**

Dental assistants must be consistently organized in order for procedures to happen in a timely manner and to keep the dentist on schedule. Staying one step ahead is a skill a good dental assistant must have. Are you always disheveled? Are you constantly looking for things?

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### ■ Ability to multi-task and problem solve

Dental assistants must keep track of everything going on in the dental practice, simultaneously. Dental assistants are assisting the dentist, passing instruments and mixing materials all the while watching the patient and making sure that they are fine, plus listening to the dentist at the same time. Dental assistants must keep track of supplies and when things should be ordered so that they are received in a timely manner. Dental assistants must possess critical thinking skills, which will help them solve problems before they erupt. Can you listen to music and read a book at the same time? Can you run and talk on the phone?

### ■ Ability to use fine motor skills

Dental assisting requires the need to be dexterous. You will be handling many different types of materials and instruments. All these instruments, when handled improperly, could cause undue harm to you, your co-workers, or the patient. Dental assistants must be able to pass instruments and materials in a safe and effective manner.

**Think about the following abilities that you must be able to perform within the scope of practice as a dental assistant:**

- Lift and carry up to ten pounds
- Retrieve dental supplies from storage areas at different heights
- Reach overhead equipment to a height of three feet
- Perform for a prolonged period of time without breaks
- Sit or stand for up to four hours at a time without breaks
- Manipulate mechanical and patient care equipment (i.e. dials, switches, push buttons, keyboards, syringes, and blood pressure equipment)
- Maneuver in tight quarters common to dental offices
- Differentiate among subtle shades of gray used in radiographic image formation
- Discern color and shape changes in oral tissue
- Respond to body sounds through a stethoscope
- Stoop, bend and twist for a minimum of 30 minutes at a time while sitting or standing and be able to repeat these activities at frequent intervals
- Use upper body movements to grasp, push, pull and reach overhead equipment, and rotate and reach laterally
- Be able to use the pincher grasp when passing or retrieving instruments and/or materials
- Use dental instruments with precision and control
- Function without causing harm to self or others
- Respond to requests and directions
- Clearly and effectively communicate instructions and information to patients, and share information with the other team members
- Exhibit appropriate professional and social skills in all interactions
- Clearly and effectively communicate instructions and information in written and oral form
- Maintain cleanliness and personal grooming consistent with close personal contact
- Wear protective equipment such as surgical gloves, face masks, and goggles
- Be aware of possible exposure to hazards such as radiographic rays and materials, dental materials and medicaments, blood and bodily fluids.

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### **THE CAREER PATH**

The **Associate in Science in Dental Assisting** program prepares graduates for employment assisting dentists, providing patient care, performing laboratory functions, as well as basic office procedures. Graduates typically work under the supervision of a dentist in the private dental office setting. However, dental assistants also find employment in health clinics, institutions, in the military, in sales and/or marketing, in insurance companies, and in research. Another option is dental office management, whereby you would be responsible for the working operation of a dental office facility and possibly the management of employee schedules.

Students prepare to take the Dental Assisting National Board Exam. Upon successful completion of the exam, students have the ability to work as a Certified Dental Assistant who is licensed/registered to practice Dental Assisting in Massachusetts. Careful planning with a career counselor is essential.

#### **Career Planning Activities:**

- \_\_\_ Work with career advisor to create resume, cover letter and help improve your interview skills
- \_\_\_ Identify internship and volunteer opportunities in your desired field
- \_\_\_ Attend career workshops and job fairs

To learn more about the work responsibilities of dental assistants, visit the **Massachusetts Dental Assistant Association** at: [www.massdentalassistants.org](http://www.massdentalassistants.org) and the **American Dental Assistants Association** at: [www.dentalassistant.org](http://www.dentalassistant.org)

To view job search websites, visit: [www.jobs-to-careers.com](http://www.jobs-to-careers.com) or [www.jobs.monster.com](http://www.jobs.monster.com) or [www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com)



### **THE TRANSFER PATH**

Dental assistants can transition into a number of career paths after receiving their **Associate Degree in Dental Assisting**. Students can continue their education toward another associate degree or bachelor's degree in a health related field, including: dental hygiene, dental laboratory technology, health education, health science, or can pursue a career as a dentist. The following schools are a small representation of the vast number of options available for transfer:

#### **Associate Degrees in Dental Hygiene (within Massachusetts):**

- Middlesex Community College
- Bristol Community College
- Cape Cod Community College
- Mount Wachusett Community College
- Quinsigamond Community College
- Springfield Technical Community College

#### **Associate Degree in Dental Laboratory Technology (within Massachusetts):**

- Middlesex Community College

#### **Baccalaureate Degree in Health Education (within Massachusetts):**

- Bridgewater State College
- Springfield College

#### **Associate Degree in Health Science (within Massachusetts)**

- Berkshire Community College

#### **Baccalaureate Degree in Health Science (within Massachusetts):**

- Salem State College

### **ADVISING NOTES**

In order for a student to be eligible to participate in an academic, community or clinical program that involves potential unsupervised contact with children, the disabled, the elderly, or other vulnerable populations, the student will be required to undergo a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check and/or a Sex Offender Registry Information (SORI) check. Students who are unable to pass the CORI and/or SORI would not be able to participate in the field placement required to complete the program.

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### Transfer Planning Activities:

- \_\_\_ Work with an advisor to discuss *MassTransfer*, Articulations and transfer agreements.
- \_\_\_ Visit your selected campuses in person. Every college looks good online or in a glossy photo, but you can get a better feel when you visit.
- \_\_\_ Meet with a transfer counselor to identify transfer scholarships.
- \_\_\_ Research admissions requirements and deadlines at four-year colleges and universities.

### **MCC ADVISING RESOURCES**

#### **Career Services:**

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/careerservices>

#### **Transfer Services:**

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/transfer>

#### **MassTransfer:**

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/transfer/masstransfer.aspx>

#### **Financial Aid:**

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/financialaid>

#### **Foundation Scholarships:**

<https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/foundation/scholarships>

#### **College Board Match Maker:**

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search>

You can find more information about careers and salaries at: [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

### **DENTAL RELATED RESOURCES:**

#### **American Dental Assistants Association:**

[www.dentalassistant.org](http://www.dentalassistant.org)

#### **Massachusetts Dental Assistants Association:**

[www.massdentalassistants.org](http://www.massdentalassistants.org)

#### **American Dental Education Association:**

[www.adea.org](http://www.adea.org)

#### **American Dental Association:**

[www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)

#### **Hispanic Dental Association:**

[www.hdassoc.org](http://www.hdassoc.org)

#### **Massachusetts Dental Society:**

[www.massdental.org](http://www.massdental.org)

#### **Massachusetts Board of Registration in Dentistry:**

[www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments)  
(search dentistry)