

Practice of a Dental Hygienist under Remote Supervision

References from § 54.1-2722 of the Code of Virginia

1. What is meant by “remote supervision”

"Remote supervision" means that a dentist is accessible and available for communication and consultation with a dental hygienist employed by such dentist during the delivery of dental hygiene services but such dentist may not have conducted an initial examination of the patients who are to be seen and treated by the dental hygienist and may not be present with the dental hygienist when dental hygiene services are being provided.

2. Who can employ a dental hygienist to practice dental hygiene under the remote supervision?

A dentist who holds an active, unrestricted license by the Virginia Board of Dentistry and who has a dental office physically located in the Commonwealth.

3. What qualifications are necessary for a dental hygienist to practice under remote supervision?

The hygienist must have (i) completed a continuing education course offered by an accredited dental education program or from a continuing education provider approved by the Board and (ii) at least two years of clinical experience, consisting of at least 2,500 hours of clinical experience.

4. Are there other requirements for practice under remote supervision?

A dental hygienist practicing under remote supervision shall have professional liability insurance with policy limits acceptable to the supervising dentist.

5. In what settings can a dental hygienist practice under remote supervision?

A hygienist can only practice dental hygiene under remote supervision at a community health center, charitable safety net facility, free clinic, long-term care facility, elementary or secondary school, Head Start program, or women, infants, and children program.

6. What tasks can a dental hygienist practicing under remote supervision perform?

A hygienist practicing under remote supervision may (a) obtain a patient's treatment history and consent, (b) perform an oral assessment, (c) perform scaling and polishing, (d) perform all educational and preventative services, (e) take X-rays as ordered by the supervising dentist or consistent with a standing order, (f) maintain appropriate documentation in the patient's chart, (g) administer topical oral fluorides under an oral or

written order or a standing protocol issued by a dentist or a doctor of medicine or osteopathic medicine pursuant to subsection V of §54.1-3408, and (h) perform any other service ordered by the supervising dentist or required by statute or Board regulation.

7. Is the dental hygienist allowed to administer local anesthetic or nitrous oxide?

No, a dental hygienist practicing under remote supervision is not allowed administer local anesthetic or nitrous oxide.

8. What disclosures and permissions are required?

Prior to providing a patient dental hygiene services, a dental hygienist practicing under remote supervision shall obtain (1) the patient's or the patient's legal representative's signature on a statement disclosing that the delivery of dental hygiene services under remote supervision is not a substitute for the need for regular dental examinations by a dentist and (2) verbal or written permission of any dentist who has treated the patient in the previous 12 months and can be identified by the patient.

9. How is the dental hygienist required to involve the dentist when practicing under remote supervision?

- a) After conducting an initial oral assessment of a patient, a dental hygienist practicing under remote supervision shall consult with the supervising dentist prior to providing further dental hygiene services if such patient is medically compromised or has periodontal disease.
- b) A dental hygienist practicing under remote supervision shall inform the supervising dentist of all findings for a patient. A dental hygienist practicing under remote supervision may continue to treat a patient for 90 days. After such 90-day period, the supervising dentist, absent emergent circumstances, shall either conduct an examination of the patient or refer the patient to another dentist to conduct an examination. The supervising dentist shall develop a treatment plan for the patient and either the supervising dentist or the dental hygienist shall provide the treatment plan to the patient.
- c) The supervising dentist shall review a patient's records at least once every 10 months.

10. Is a dental hygienist who practicing under remote supervision allowed to also practice dental hygiene under general supervision whether as an employee or as a volunteer?

Yes, the requirements of § 54.1-2722 F do not prevent practice under general supervision.

11. Are the requirements for remote supervision different for a public health dental hygienist employed by the Virginia Department of Health?

Yes, remote supervision in a public health setting is defined in § 54.1-2722 E:

E. For the purposes of this subsection, "remote supervision" means that a public health dentist has regular, periodic communications with a public health dental hygienist regarding patient treatment, but such dentist may not have conducted an initial examination of the patients who are to be seen and treated by the dental hygienist and may not be present with the dental hygienist when dental hygiene services are being provided.

Notwithstanding any provision of law, a dental hygienist employed by the Virginia Department of Health who holds a license issued by the Board of Dentistry may provide educational and preventative dental care in the Commonwealth under the remote supervision of a dentist employed by the Department of Health. A dental hygienist providing such services shall practice pursuant to a protocol adopted by the Commissioner of Health on September 23, 2010, having been developed jointly by (i) the medical directors of the Cumberland Plateau, Southside, and Lenowisco Health Districts; (ii) dental hygienists employed by the Department of Health; (iii) the Director of the Dental Health Division of the Department of Health; (iv) one representative of the Virginia Dental Association; and (v) one representative of the Virginia Dental Hygienists' Association. Such protocol shall be adopted by the Board as regulations.