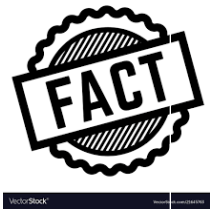




A Public Health Dental Hygienist (PHDH) has an Associate or higher level of education, Illinois RDH licensure and RDH certification training received from a CODA-Accredited RDH certification program—often from approved two-year community college program.

According to the IL Dental Practice Act, a PHDH means a hygienist who holds a valid license to practice in the State, has 2 years of full-time clinical experience or an equivalent of 4,000 hours of clinical experience and has completed at least 42 clock hours of additional structured courses in dental education in advanced areas specific to public health dentistry, along with a competency exam upon completion of the 42 course hours.



- This certification allows for preventive care to Medicaid eligible and low-income patients of all ages prior to the dentist examining the patient.
- On July 29, 2016, the original legislation became [Public Act 99-0680](#) and took effect January 1, 2017. It took an additional **three years of discussions about curriculum language** between Illinois State Dental Society, Illinois Dental Hygienists' Association, and Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR), along with a push for additional legislation ([HB2676](#)), to outline the coursework path for PHDH certificate training. This additional bill, HB2676, became a public law after being signed by the IL Governor on July 12, 2019 and outlined the curriculum for the PHDH training program, becoming [Public Act 101-0064](#). Demonstrating Illinois Dental Hygienists' Association's (IDHA) full commitment and effort to increase Access to Care, the curriculum for certification was developed and first implemented by IDHA in March 2020.
- **A PHDH has a written collaborative agreement with, and is employed by, a licensed Illinois dentist.** The collaborative dentist still collects the payment from the patient just as they normally would in typical practice settings, however the PHDH is legally allowed to provide routine preventive care to Medicaid eligible and low-income patients of all ages and health conditions, prior to the dentist examining the patient. Doctor/patient relationship is always intact, as the *collaborative dentist will continue to oversee a patient's care* and perform a thorough exam at a later date. **The collaboration and certification does not expand the scope of practice for a Public Health Dental Hygienist.**



- ***"This is dangerous and unnecessary."* – FALSE!** Thirty-eight states (not including IL) allow [some level of direct access](#) to preventative patient care. If it was dangerous and unnecessary, then why have thirty-eight states, also our own state of IL allowed it?
- ***"Their only real goal is to separate from supervisor by a dentist and move toward independent practice"* - FALSE!** There has **never** been an intent for Illinois Registered Dental Hygienists to separate from a supervising dentist to move toward independent practice. The only goal is to provide access to care for underserved populations! In fact, part of the mission statement of IDHA is "to improve the public's total health, to advance the art and science of dental hygiene by ensuring access to quality oral health care..."
- ***"It has taken five years for the dental hygienists to develop a very simple training program."* – FALSE!** The legislation for the public act began in July 2016, but took until July 2019 for rules to be established by our governing body regarding the required curriculum requirements. Once the IL Governor signed the public act into the IL Dental Practice Act law in July 2019, the IDHA worked quickly to create their required certification course.
- ***"Most hygienists can command a 40-50 dollars an hour in salary and the vast majority work in high end, well equipped dental offices, many part time with only the basic two year associate degree."* – FALSE!** According to ZipRecruiter, the average salary for a dental hygienist in IL is \$29 per hour as of April 27, 2021. The top 10 highest paying areas listed being in close proximity to Chicago. The statement does not account for the remaining area of the state beyond the Chicagoland area. Entry level dental hygienists earn an Associates in Applied Science degree with certification. Dental hygienists take 1-2 years of prerequisite courses prior to beginning dental hygiene school that consists of 2.5 years of schooling through a CODA accredited program, most graduating with over 80 credit hours to obtain that "basic two-year associate degree" that requires 60 credit hours to complete. Many dental hygienists pursue a higher degree, and the ADHA supports entry level to become a Bachelor's level BSDH degree. Don't forget the National and Regional boards taken to become licensed!