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CAREER PATHWAYS IN DENTISTRY:

Using Your International Education in the U.S.



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INTRODUCTION

Immigrating to the United States is an opportunity to use your international training to either advance in your field or pursue a new career that builds on your education and experience. Because dentistry involves obtaining a license—a process that can be costly and time-consuming—it is especially important to fully consider your options.

The Pathways Guide at a Glance

If you have completed your education in another country and are now starting your career in the United States, you will need to understand to what extent you meet the academic requirements of your chosen career.

- The **Gaining Recognition for Your International Education** section (p. 9) will explain how to determine the U.S. equivalency of your international degree to help you explore career pathways in dentistry and other fields.
- The **Educational Pathways in the Field of Dentistry** section (p. 11) provides examples of careers in dental health that may match your qualifications.
- If you want to continue your dentistry career in the United States, you must obtain a U.S. license to practice. See the **Licensing and Certification Requirements in Dentistry** section (p. 22).
- Not all internationally trained dentists decide to pursue a dentistry license in the United States, either because of the time and expense involved, or because they want to pursue a different career. See the **Transferable Skills and Using Them in Related or Alternative Careers** section (p. 26).

Let's get started!

Strategies for Success

Ask Lots of Questions

While you may have a strong idea of what your career will be in the United States based on the professional experience you already have, establishing yourself in a new country is a chance to reach new goals and possibilities. Analyzing your career options in the U.S. can be challenging, but by remaining flexible you can use the education and experience you already have to take steps to succeed in the U.S.

As you research your options, ask yourself:

- What are my short term and long term employment goals?
- What options are available to me based on my skills and qualifications?
- What are the steps and requirements in terms of time, costs, and additional training to pursue my goal?
- Who can I talk to about my options?

Make a Plan

After you've explored some of the career options available to you in the United States, it is time to make decisions and come up with a plan. In the U.S., developing your career path requires a life-long commitment to learning, networking, and taking risks.

A successful plan includes realistic steps and time frames for completion. Your plan should also make it possible for you to work towards multiple goals at once and allow for some setbacks along the way. It will take patience to reach your goals and it is normal to change your mind or adapt to new circumstances as you move forward.

Think about the steps it will take to reach your goal. A clear goal-oriented plan may look something like this:

GOAL: Improve my language skills.

STEPS TO GOAL:

- Take an English language course that suits my needs.
- Meet with an English language conversation partner weekly.
- Learn terminology and professional language in my field.
- Read the newspaper every day.

*You can use the **SMART Goal Worksheet (p. 32)** to guide you as you outline your plan.*

Take Initiative

While your **academic and professional credentials** are very important in your professional success, so are skills like your communication style, English language level, and ability to adapt to U.S. workplace culture. **Networking** with dental health professionals you know, meeting professionals in the field, joining a professional association, attending conferences, and volunteering in a community dental clinic are great ways to practice the skills you will need to succeed in your job.

Finding meaningful work as an immigrant can take time and you may face challenging obstacles. Although many factors are out of your control, try to remain flexible, be persistent, and take initiative. As you explore this guide, you will find a number of helpful resources to support you.

GLOSSARY

Academic and professional credential: The degree, diploma, or license you receive when you complete a program, pass examinations, or meet a set of requirements

Networking: Interacting with other people to exchange information and develop contacts, especially to further one's career.

Case Study: Francisco



Francisco Silva is a 27-year-old dental technician who studied at the Murilo Calgaro Dental Design Institute in Curitiba, Brazil. When Francisco moved to the Boston area he spoke very little English, and although he did pick up basic conversational English quickly enough, he did not have the level of proficiency or professional vocabulary needed to be competitive in his field. So, he worked his way through a book on Dentistry English and practiced speaking with a conversational partner at his local library once a week. As his English improved, Francisco also started reading dentistry journal articles—he did not understand all of what he read, but the articles gave him a better sense of industry jargon. Eventually, Francisco began reaching out to dental laboratories in his area to see who was hiring, focusing on a few labs that were run by immigrants like himself. He got an interview and was ultimately hired by a lab whose owner was happy to help a fellow immigrant. Francisco is thrilled to be working in his profession again, and he hopes to start studying for his Certified Dental Technician credential in the coming year; even though the certification is optional, he knows it is respected in his field, and will open even more professional doors for him.

YOUR CAREER PATHWAY IN THE UNITED STATES

Like many immigrants, you may initially struggle to gain entry into your professional field in U.S. While you may have adequate knowledge or experience, the challenge often occurs in translating your skills and qualifications in a way that local employers will value and understand. You may also need further education and training, an understanding of your local labor market, and knowledge of how to navigate your options to choose a **career pathway**.



Your career pathway is made up of the educational and professional decisions that will open doors to new opportunities. Education and training are the building blocks of your career—with the skills you acquire, you can earn promotions and take on additional professional responsibilities

To start thinking about your career options, you will need to understand the difference between regulated and non-regulated professions.

Understanding Regulated Professions

Each state decides which professions it will regulate and what level of formal education or training is required for entry into the field. In the United States, specific authorities or regulatory bodies are responsible for recognizing professional credentials required for state licensing. Since the time and cost associated with licensing varies by state, contact the relevant regulatory body before deciding to proceed with licensing. In this guide, careers usually requiring licensure are clearly marked – but again, this varies from state to state.

Understanding Non-Regulated Professions

Some occupations in the United States are either internally regulated by professional associations, or are entirely non-regulated. However, although less strict than **regulated professions**, certain standards of professional practice or **designations** might still be preferred by employers and professional associations in non-regulated professions. You can demonstrate that you meet these standards through a certification process linked to training programs provided by employers or community colleges.

GLOSSARY

Career pathway: A series of connected education and training programs that enable individuals to secure a job or advance in an industry or occupation.

Regulated professions: Professions that require a license or certification.

Designation: A title earned by an individual through a certification process.

Can I work as a dentist in the United States?

If you do not have a United States dentistry license, your options for working in the dental health field in the U.S. are limited.

The dental health industry in the U.S. is highly-regulated to protect public health and safety. That means that most dental health occupations in the U.S., including dentistry, require either a license or **certification** to practice.

The dentistry license you may have from your home country is not valid in the U.S. Internationally trained dentists need to meet the same requirements as U.S.-educated dentists.



In this guide, occupations that require a state certification or licensure process are clearly marked.

Many internationally trained professionals decide not to pursue employment in regulated professions due to the challenges of **relicensing**. The dental health field provides access to less-regulated employment opportunities in both clinical and non-clinical capacities, often with voluntary certification.

If you decide against relicensing as a dentist in the United States, you can still work in the field of dental health in a non-regulated occupation. Some related careers are discussed in the **Transferable Skills and Using Them in Related or Alternative Careers** section of this guide (p. 26).

GLOSSARY

Certification: A voluntary credentialing process by a non-governmental, private professional association.

Relicensing: Having to meet licensing requirements in the United States, even if you have a license from another country.

THE DENTISTRY PROFESSION IN THE UNITED STATES

Dentistry is a regulated healthcare profession that focuses on providing care to individuals, families, and communities.

Dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, and dental lab technicians all have vital roles on multi-disciplinary dental health-care teams, each with their special areas of responsibility. Dentists utilize technical, clinical, and managerial skills. They work in private dental practices, community clinics, and hospitals, and they can specialize in specific aspects of dental care, such as pediatric dentistry or orthodontics.

Working as a Dentist in the United States

A dentist's roles and responsibilities in the United States may be different than in other countries where the profession refers to more general care. Internationally trained dentists need to meet the same requirements as U.S.-educated dentists, so even if you have many years of experience, you must obtain a new license in the U.S if you plan to work as a dentist.

In the U.S., each state/territory regulates the practice of dental care professionals and establishes its own set of requirements and **scope of practice** concerning professional licensure.

Internationally educated dentists can obtain licenses in the U.S., although it can be a costly and time-consuming process.

For example, to register as a dentist in New York in 2019, you would have to pay an initial credential evaluation fee of \$210.00, take the \$205 TOEFL exam to prove English language proficiency, complete a two or three year advanced standing program (tuition varies by university, but one New York dental school's two year program costs \$195,166¹), take both parts I and II of the National Board Dental Examinations (NBDE) for between \$915-1,315 (depending on whether or not you graduated from a CODA accredited school), complete a residency program of at least one year's duration (tuition varies by program, but at one New York area hospital, residency programs range from \$5,000 for a one year program to \$35,000 for a three year program²), and pay a licensure and initial registration fee of \$377.³

NOTE: Effective July 31, 2020, the NBDE will be replaced with the new Integrated National Board Dental Examination (INBDE). See [Licensing and Certification Requirements in Dentistry](#) section (p. 22) for information.

The costs associated with relicensing change over time and vary depending on your state, so check what the specifics are for your location.

GLOSSARY

Scope of practice: The procedures, actions, and processes a practitioner is permitted to undertake in keeping with the terms of their professional license.

Since dentistry license requirements vary by state, consider these key points:

- Each state in the U.S. is responsible for the licensure of dentists within that state. State-specific licensure information can be found by visiting the American Dental Association's **State Licensure Tables**.
- All U.S. dental boards require candidates to pass the National Board Dental Examinations (NBDE), both parts I and II, administered by the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations.⁴ NOTE: Effective July 31, 2020, the NBDE will be replaced with the new Integrated National Board Dental Examination (INBDE). See **Licensing and Certification Requirements in Dentistry** section (p. 22) for information.

Roles and Responsibilities

In the U.S., dentists are responsible for:

- Working with a variety of patients from pediatric to geriatric, and possibly specializing in one area such as orthodontics, endodontics, or oral radiology or surgery.
- Monitoring the growth and development of patients' teeth and jaws.
- Diagnosing and treating oral diseases.
- Teaching patients, and sometimes communities, about proper oral care and disease prevention.
- Supervising dental hygienists and dental assistants.
- If in private practice, running their own business in addition to practicing dentistry.⁵

Understanding Job Titles

A dentist's role and responsibilities depends on their areas of expertise and experience. For example, when searching for employment as a dentist, you may see job postings with the following titles:

- General Dentist
- Associate Dentist
- Pediatric Dentist
- Orthodontist
- Oral Surgeon
- Endodontist

You can read more about academic and professional credentials in the **Educational Pathways in the Field of Dentistry** section of this guide (p. 11).

GAINING RECOGNITION FOR YOUR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Your education is the foundation of your career. Although there may be challenges to using your international credentials in the United States, you do not have to start over. For an internationally trained professional, exploring career pathways begins with an understanding of the value of the education you received in your home country.

Obtaining an **international credential evaluation** is often the first step an immigrant takes to gain access to educational and employment opportunities in the U.S. A credential evaluation helps you gain recognition for your previous studies by considering your country's educational system, the status of the institution you attended, the content of the program, and any entry and graduation requirements.



A credential evaluation compares the education you received in your country to a similar degree or diploma in the United States and provides a **degree equivalency**.

In the United States, employers, licensing boards, and universities use credential evaluations to judge the quality and level of your academic achievements in comparison to U.S.-educated candidates.

- Universities, for example, use the information to make admissions decisions and to award transfer credit or advanced standing in a program.
- Employers and licensing boards refer to credential evaluations to evaluate whether or not you meet their academic requirements.

Unlike many other countries, the U.S. does not have a national education ministry to evaluate international degrees. As a result, some academic institutions and state licensing boards—and nearly all employers—rely on agencies like **World Education Services (WES)** to examine official documents. Others perform their own evaluations or use preferred agencies. All U.S. dental schools that offer advanced standing dental programs for internationally educated dental graduates require a credential evaluation from either WES or or **Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE)**. Some programs accept both evaluations, and some only accept one of them, so always check with the program you wish to attend to determine which evaluation you should pursue.

Before requesting a credential evaluation from any agency, contact the institution that needs the evaluation to understand their requirements. These institutions are responsible for the final recognition decision.

GLOSSARY

International credential evaluation: An expert analysis of a international degree or diploma.

Degree equivalency: The extent to which a degree or diploma earned abroad compares to a similar U.S. credential.

If you are exploring a new career, it may be helpful to have an idea of the U.S. equivalency of your international credentials.

WES allows you to preview the U.S. equivalency of your highest completed degree by using the **WES free equivalency tool**.

Note: This preview does not replace a formal credential evaluation that may be needed for official purposes.

Many regulated professions in the U.S. require you to have your international degree evaluation conducted by a professional association or preferred provider. If you are applying for a license or certification, always remember to check with your state's licensing board and/or educational institution to ensure that a WES evaluation is recognized and accepted. If so, you can apply for a **WES Credential Evaluation**.



Watch the WES Credential Evaluation & Recognition video to learn more about credential evaluation.

Advanced Standing and Transfer Credit

If you are applying to an academic program, you may be eligible for advanced standing or transfer credit for previous education.

- **Advanced standing:** This means you may be allowed to skip prerequisites for admission into a course, or not repeat a required course, reducing the time to complete a degree.
- **Transfer credit:** This means that your previous education is counted toward the total number of credits required for the degree.

For internationally educated individuals, advanced standing and transfer credit is usually determined at the time of application through a international credential evaluation.

To practice as a dentist in the U.S., all internationally educated dentists are REQUIRED to earn a U.S. DDS or DMD degree by completing a two- to three-year advanced standing program at a dental school accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), even if they have already graduated from a international dental program. *Note: DDS and DMD are equivalent and interchangeable degrees. Different institutions may use one name or the other.* Most, but not all, of these programs can be applied to through the **ADEA Centralized Application for Advanced Placement for International Dentists (ADEA CAAPID)**.

EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS IN THE FIELD OF DENTISTRY

Once you know the value of your international degree, you can use the information in this section to move forward in your career.

Dentistry is a growing and rewarding field that offers many exciting career options. In this section you will find some examples of dentistry careers that you may be qualified for, including their key roles and responsibilities and where further education may be helpful. You will also find information on how to meet the academic requirements for some popular dentistry careers.

There are many ways to enter the dentistry field. Some internationally trained dentists gain U.S. experience in entry-level professions as they pursue licensing and certification. Others begin by enrolling in degree programs to gain access to higher-level jobs.



HELPFUL TIPS

Research shows that immigrants who add a U.S. degree or certification to their international education and training are more likely to progress faster in their careers.



A career pathway is a series of “stackable credentials”—achievements that build on each other based on continuing education, specialization, and certification to allow you to move up a career ladder.

ASSOCIATE
DEGREE

BACHELOR'S
DEGREE

MASTER'S
DEGREE


DOCTORATE
DEGREE

ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE IN DENTAL ASSISTING

ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE IN DENTAL HYGIENE

Dental Assistant

- Perform a variety of patient care, office, and laboratory duties under the supervision of dentists.
- May find work with just a certificate in dental assisting, but an associate degree in dental assisting may make you a more attractive candidate for employment.

-  **Licensure not required in most states, but a Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) credential is offered by the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB); they also offer National Entry Level Dental Assistant (NELDA), Certified Orthodontic Assistant (COA), Certified Preventive Functions Dental Assistant (CPFDA), and Certified Restorative Functions Dental Assistant (CRFDA) credentials.⁶ DANB credentials are recognized or required in 39 U.S. states/territories, plus the U.S. Air Force and the Department of Veterans Affairs.⁷**

Dental Technician

- Design, fit, fabricate, and repair dentures and dental devices as prescribed by dentists and other specialists.
- May find work with just a certificate in dental laboratory technology, but an associate degree in dental laboratory technology may make you a more attractive candidate for employment.
- Licensure is not required, but a Certified Dental Technician (CDT) credential is offered by the National Association of Dental Laboratories.⁸

Dental Hygienist

- Provide preventive dental care such as teeth cleanings, and teach patients how to practice good oral hygiene.
- Almost every state requires that dental hygienists graduate from a dental hygiene program accredited by The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). Associate degrees in dental hygiene usually take three years of full time study to complete.

-  **Licensure required in all states.⁹ Internationally trained dental hygienists may take the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination (NBDHE) required for licensure if a credential evaluation from Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE) shows that their education was equivalent to a CODA accredited dental hygiene program.¹⁰**



GO FURTHER

While you can find jobs with an associate degree, a bachelor's degree may increase your chances of finding employment.

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN DENTAL HYGIENE

Dental Hygienist

- Provide preventive dental care such as teeth cleanings, and teach patients how to practice good oral hygiene.
- With a bachelor's degree, dental hygienists can take on more responsibility at work, including assuming a managerial role. They can also seek employment in education or with pharmaceutical companies.¹¹



Licensure required in all states.¹² Internationally trained dental hygienists may take the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination (NBDHE) required for licensure if a credential evaluation from Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE) shows that their education was equivalent to a CODA accredited dental hygiene program.¹³



GO FURTHER

You can upgrade your education and skills to qualify for more jobs in the field of dental health by earning a Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) or Doctor of Medicine in Dentistry (DMD) degree.

DOCTOR OF DENTAL SURGERY (DDS)

DOCTOR OF MEDICINE IN DENTISTRY (DMD)

Dentist

- Diagnose and treat problems in patients' teeth, gums, and mouth.
- Instruct patients in proper care of the teeth and gums, and general oral health.
- To practice as a dentist in the U.S., internationally trained dentists are **REQUIRED** to complete a two to three year advanced standing program at a dental school accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). Most, but not all, of these programs can be applied to through the **ADEA Centralized Application for Advanced Placement for International Dentists (ADEA CAAPID)**.



Licensure required in all states.



GO FURTHER

Upgrade your education and skills to qualify for more jobs in the field of dental health by earning a post-doctoral master's degree or advanced specialty certificate.

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DENTISTRY

Master's degrees in dental health can go by many names. There are Master of Science programs in dentistry, oral biology, dental research, and more. If you do not plan to practice as a dentist, then you DO NOT need to complete the advanced standing program required for practicing dentistry in the U.S. before applying to master's programs; your international degree, if found equivalent to a U.S. degree, is sufficient. If you do not wish to practice as a dentist, a master's degree can lead to employment in the fields of dental research, education, or program administration.

You can also pursue a master's degree in a dental specialty, such as pediatric dentistry. A master's degree alone will not qualify you to take a dental specialty board examination; for this reason, most schools that offer specialty master's degree programs combine them with a residency program, so that students graduate with both a master's degree and the advanced certificate that leads to board certification. You will find the career options for this educational pathway in the following section, under "ADVANCED CERTIFICATE/RESIDENCY in a dental specialty."

Dental Researcher

- Conduct research aimed at improving individual and communal dental health.
- Research may include innovating new and better ways to prevent and treat patients' dental problems, as well as dental health policy.
- Licensure not required.

Dental Professor

- Plan and teach courses in the dentistry program of a university, and possibly conduct research and publish your findings.
- Work closely with students to help them achieve their academic and career goals.
- Stay informed about changes and innovations in the field of dentistry.
- While just a master's degree can qualify you for work as an instructor at the college level, many universities prefer to hire professors with a PhD.
- Licensure not required, although many universities prefer to hire professors who are at least qualified to apply for licensure.

MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH DEGREE (MPH)

In the U.S., any person with an accredited undergraduate degree may pursue an MPH, which usually takes two-years of full-time work to complete. Many U.S. dental schools now offer dual MPH/DDS or DMD programs, or MPH programs that dental students may pursue in addition to their dental programs. Dental public health is a recognized dental specialty that focuses on bringing dental care and education to entire communities rather than just individuals, and also promotes this goal through research and policy.¹⁴ An MPH will not qualify you to take the board examination in dental public health, but it is a stepping stone to earning the advanced certificate that does lead to board certification, as many dental public health residency programs require candidates to hold an MPH.¹⁵

ADVANCED CERTIFICATE/RESIDENCY IN A DENTAL SPECIALTY

There are ten dental specialties recognized by the National Commission on Recognition of Dental Specialties and Certifying Boards: Dental Public Health, Endodontics, Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics, Pediatric Dentistry, Periodontics, Prosthodontics, and Anesthesiology.¹⁶ In order to take the board exam in any of these specialties, you must first complete an accredited advanced education program, or residency, resulting in an advanced certificate in that specialty. Many of these programs are combined with Master of Science programs, so that residents graduate with both an advanced certificate and a master's degree.

Although any licensed dentist can perform dental work in a specialty area, a dentist must be board certified in order to be allowed to claim the title of that specialty (i.e. orthodontist).

Public Health Dentist

- Focus on bringing dental care and education to entire communities, rather than just individuals.
- Pursue this goal through education, outreach, research, and policy, as well as through treating patients.



Licensure required.

- While any licensed dentist can perform public health dental work, board certification through the **American Board of Dental Public Health** is required in order to claim the title of public health dentist.
- Many residency programs require applicants to have already earned an MPH.

Endodontist

- Specialize in performing root canals and other treatments aimed at saving diseased teeth.



Licensure required.



While any licensed dentist can perform endodontic work, board certification through the American Board of Endodontics is required in order to claim the title of endodontist.

Oral and Maxillofacial Pathologist

- Study, research, and diagnose diseases of the mouth and jaw, including cancer.
- Do not generally provide direct patient care, but rather perform tests such as biopsies in consultation with dentists and physicians who are providing direct care.¹⁷



Licensure required.



Board certification required through the American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology.

Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon

- Specialize in diagnosing and surgically treating diseases, conditions, and injuries of the mouth, teeth, jaw, and neck.
- May offer cosmetic surgery.¹⁸



Licensure required.



Board certification required through the American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

Orthodontist

- Specialize in the diagnosis and correction of alignment problems in teeth and jaws.



Licensure required.



Board certification required through the American Board of Orthodontics.

Pediatric Dentist

- Specialize in providing comprehensive oral health care for infants, children, and adolescents.



Licensure required.



While any licensed dentist can perform pediatric dental work, board certification is required through the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry in order to claim the title of pediatric dentist.

Periodontist

- Specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of gum disease and oral inflammation, including the ligaments and bones supporting the teeth.¹⁹



Licensure required.



While any licensed dentist can perform periodontic work, board certification is required through the American Board of Periodontology in order to claim the title of periodontist.

Prosthodontist

- Specialize in replacing missing natural teeth with prosthetic substitutes such as dentures, bridges and implants.²⁰



Licensure required.



Board certification required through the American Board of Prosthodontics.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN DENTISTRY (PHD)

PhD programs in dental health can go by many names. There are PhD programs in oral biology, dental biology, oral health sciences, and more. If you do not plan to practice as a dentist, then you DO NOT need to complete the advanced standing program required for practicing dentistry in the U.S. before applying to PhD programs; your international degree, if found equivalent to a U.S. degree, is sufficient. If you do not wish to practice as a dentist, a PhD can lead to employment in the fields of dental research, education, or program administration.

Dental Researcher

- Conduct research aimed at improving individual and communal dental health.
- Research may include innovating new and better ways to prevent and treat patients' dental problems, as well as dental health policy.
- Licensure not required.

Dental Professor

- Plan and teach courses in the dentistry program of a university, and possibly conduct research and publish your findings.
- Work closely with students to help them achieve their academic and career goals.
- Stay informed about changes and innovations in the field of dentistry.
- Licensure not required, although many universities prefer to hire professors who are at least qualified to apply for licensure.

Academic Requirements in Dentistry

Consider these educational requirements for careers in the field of dentistry, from entry-level to advanced professions.

To practice as a dentist in the U.S., all internationally trained dentists are **REQUIRED** to complete a two to three year advanced standing program at a dental school accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). Most, but not all, of these programs can be applied to through the **ADEA Centralized Application for Advanced Placement for International Dentists (ADEA CAAPID)**.

If you wish to practice as a specialist, you **MUST** complete an advanced standing program before applying to post-doctoral advanced certificate and/or master's degree programs. If you do not wish to practice dentistry, but rather to pursue a career in research, education, or administration, then you **DO NOT** need to complete an advanced standing program before applying to post-doctoral programs.



Requirements for Dental Assistant

- ✓ May find work with just a certificate in dental assisting, but an associate degree in dental assisting may make you a more attractive candidate for employment.

- ✓ In order to be admitted to certificate or associate degree programs, you must have the equivalent of a high school diploma.

- ✓ Licensure not required in most states, but a Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) credential is offered by the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB); they also offer National Entry Level Dental

- ✓ Assistant (NELDA), Certified Orthodontic Assistant (COA), Certified Preventive Functions Dental Assistant (CPFDA), and Certified Restorative Functions Dental Assistant (CRFDA) credentials.²¹ DANB credentials are recognized or required in 39 U.S. states/territories, plus the U.S. Air Force and the Department of Veterans Affairs.²²



Requirements for Dental Technician

- ✓ May find work with just a certificate in dental laboratory technology, but an associate degree in dental laboratory technology may make you a more attractive candidate for employment.

- ✓ In order to be admitted to certificate or associate degree programs, you must have the equivalent of a high school diploma.

- ✓ Licensure is not required, but a Certified Dental Technician (CDT) credential is offered by the National Association of Dental Laboratories.²³



Requirements for Dental Hygienist

- ✓ Almost every state requires that dental hygienists graduate from a dental hygiene program accredited by The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). Associate degrees in dental hygiene usually take three years of full time study to complete.
- ✓ With a bachelor's degree, dental hygienists can take on more responsibility at work, including assuming a managerial role. They can also seek employment in education or with pharmaceutical companies.²⁴
- ✓ In order to be admitted to certificate or associate degree programs, you must have the equivalent of a high school diploma.
- ✓ Licensure required in all states.²⁵



Requirements for Dentist

- ✓ Must earn a DDS (Doctor of Dental Surgery) or DMD (Doctor of Dental Medicine) degree from a program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA).
- ✓ In order to be admitted to DDS or DMD programs, you must have the equivalent of a bachelor's degree.
- ✓ **To practice as a dentist in the U.S., internationally trained dentists are REQUIRED to complete a two to three year advanced standing program at a dental school accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA).** Most, but not all, of these programs can be applied to through the **ADEA Centralized Application for Advanced Placement for International Dentists (ADEA CAAPID).**
- ✓ In order to be admitted to advanced standing programs, you must have the international equivalent of a DDS or DMD degree.
- ✓ Licensure required in all states.



Requirements for Dental Researcher

- ✓ While just a master's degree can qualify you for research work, many employers prefer to hire researchers with a PhD.
- ✓ In order to be admitted to master's degree programs, you must have the equivalent of a bachelor's degree, DDS, or DMD. In order to be admitted to PhD programs, you must have the equivalent of a master's degree, DDS, or DMD.
- ✓ Licensure not required.



Requirements for Dental Professor

- ✓ While just a master's degree can qualify you for work as an instructor at the college level, many universities prefer to hire professors with a PhD.
- ✓ In order to be admitted to master's degree programs, you must have the equivalent of a bachelor's degree, DDS, or DMD. In order to be admitted to PhD programs, you must have the equivalent of a master's degree, DDS, or DMD.
- ✓ Licensure not required, although many universities prefer to hire professors who are at least qualified to apply for licensure.

Requirements for



Dental Specialist (Public Health Dentist, Endodontist, Oral and Maxillofacial Pathologist, Oral and Maxillofacial Radiologist, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon, Orthodontist, Pediatric Dentist, Periodontist, or Prosthodontist)

- ✓ Must complete a residency resulting in a specialty advanced certificate.
 - Specialty certificate may be combined with a master's degree, but only the certificate is required to take the specialty board exam.
 - The application to dental residencies is **ADEA PASS**.

 - ✓ In order to be admitted to residency programs, you must have a DDS or DMD degree.

 - ✓ **To practice as a dentist in the U.S., internationally trained dentists are REQUIRED to earn a U.S. DDS or DMD degree by completing a two to three year advanced standing program at a dental school accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA).** If you plan to practice as a specialist, this advanced standing program must be completed BEFORE applying to residencies. Most, but not all, of these programs can be applied to through the **ADEA Centralized Application for Advanced Placement for International Dentists (ADEA CAAPID)**.

 - ✓ In order to be admitted to advanced standing programs, you must have the international equivalent of a DDS or DMD degree.

 - ✓ Must become certified through the appropriate specialty board.

 - ✓ Licensure required in all states.
-

LICENSING AND CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS IN DENTISTRY

This section of the guide provides general information on licensing and helpful resources to guide you as you move forward. Consult the **American Association of Dental Boards** for up-to-date information.

Licensure for Dentists

If you want to practice as a dentist, you must obtain a state-issued license.

- Licensing requirements for internationally trained dentists vary by state. Each state has a board of dentistry that regulates licenses. You can search the **State Licensure Tables** for state-specific information on how to become a dentist in your jurisdiction.



To practice as a dentist in the U.S., all internationally trained dentists are **REQUIRED** to earn a U.S. DDS or DMD degree by completing a two- to three-year advanced standing program at a dental school accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). Most, but not all, of these programs can be applied to through the **ADEA Centralized Application for Advanced Placement for International Dentists (ADEA CAAPID)**.

If you wish to practice as a specialist, you **MUST** complete an advanced standing program before applying to post-doctoral advanced certificate and/or master's degree programs. If you do not wish to practice dentistry, but rather to pursue a career in research, education, or administration, then you **DO NOT** need to complete an advanced standing program before applying to post-doctoral programs.

- While specific licensure requirements vary by state, they all call for three basic requirements: education, written exam, and clinical exam.²⁶
 - The written exam, the National Board Dental Examinations (NBDE), consists of two parts, and is administered by the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations.²⁷
 - One problem that international dentists face is that they must secure a U.S. visa to take the NBDE, and visitor visas are not usually issued for the purpose of taking an exam. You can secure a student visa by enrolling in a degree program, or apply for a dependent visa if you are eligible; either one will allow you to take the NBDE.²⁸
 - Most U.S. licensing boards also require that candidates pass a clinical exam.

- For the most part, clinical exams are carried out by one of five regional clinical testing agencies, depending on where you are applying for licensure. They are:
 - **Council of Interstate Testing Agencies (CITA)**
 - **Central Regional Dental Testing Services, Inc. (CRDTS)**
 - **The Commission for Dental Competency Assessments (formerly the Northeast Regional Board of Dental Examiners (NERB))**
 - **Southern Regional Testing Agency, Inc. (SRTA)**
 - **Western Regional Examining Board (WREB)**
- New York does not require a clinical exam, but does require candidates to complete an additional year of postgraduate dental education. In Colorado, Minnesota, and Ohio, candidates have the option of completing an additional year of postgraduate dental education instead of taking a clinical exam. Washington offers the same option under certain circumstances, and Delaware requires both, although they conduct their own clinical exam which is not administered through a regional testing agency.²⁹



Beginning July 31, 2020 the NBDE Part I will be discontinued; the NBDE Part II will remain available for two more years, until it too is discontinued effective August 1, 2022. The NBDE will be replaced by a new exam: the Integrated National Board Dental Examination (INBDE). Practice questions for the INBDE are now available. For more information on this transition, see the full **Implementation Plan** issued by the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations (JCNDE).

Certification for Specialists

Dental specialty certification is administered by the appropriate board. Certification requirements vary by specialty, but generally include:

- Education: candidates must complete a residency resulting in a specialty advanced certificate.
 - Specialty certificate may be combined with a master's degree, but only the certificate is required to take the specialty board exam.
 - In order to be admitted to residency programs, you must have a DDS or DMD degree.
 - **To practice as a dentist in the U.S., internationally trained dentists are REQUIRED to earn a U.S. DDS or DMD degree by completing a two to three year advanced standing program at a dental school accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA).** If you plan to practice as a specialist, this advanced standing program must be completed BEFORE applying to residencies. Most, but not all, of these programs can be applied to through the **ADEA Centralized Application for Advanced Placement for International Dentists (ADEA CAAPID)**.

- In order to be admitted to advanced standing programs, you must have the international equivalent of a DDS or DMD degree.
- Any combination of: written, case history, oral, clinical, and/or surgical exams, depending on specialty.

The nine recognized dental specialty boards are:

- **American Board of Dental Public Health**
- **American Board of Endodontics**
- **American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology**
- **American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology**
- **American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery**
- **American Board of Orthodontics**
- **American Board of Pediatric Dentistry**
- **American Board of Periodontology**
- **American Board of Prosthodontics**

Licensure for Dental Hygienists

If you want to practice as a dental hygienist, you must obtain a state-issued license.

- Licensing requirements for internationally trained dental hygienists vary by state, but they all call for three basic requirements:
 - Education: graduation from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program, or an international program that has been found equivalent to a CODA accredited dental hygiene program.
 - Internationally trained dental hygienists must have their transcripts evaluated by Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE) and submit the results to the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations (JCNDE) in order to determine equivalency.
 - Canadian dental hygiene degrees, earned from programs accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC), are automatically recognized by CODA.
 - Written exam: the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination (NBDHE), administered by the JCNDE.³⁰
 - Clinical exam: administered by the appropriate regional or state clinical board.

Licensing takes time. Make sure to plan sufficient time for this process.

Interstate Licensing Agreements: Working in Other States

There is a system of license recognition among many U.S. states/territories known as “licensure by credentials.” Under this agreement, dental boards in 48 U.S. states/territories will grant a dentist a license to practice in their jurisdiction, without them having to meet any further requirements, if that dentist is:

- Currently licensed, and
- Has been practicing dentistry in a U.S. state or territory for at least five continuous years.
 - Five U.S. states/territories do not currently grant dental licenses by credentials: Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Nevada, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.³¹

Specific criteria required for licensure by credentials may vary by state/territory, so always contact the appropriate local dental board for details.

The information presented in this guide should not be considered exhaustive. It is always important to consult state licensing boards and professional associations for the latest and most authoritative guidance.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS AND USING THEM IN RELATED OR ALTERNATIVE CAREERS

Transferable Skills

Many immigrants find that they may not be qualified for the same job they had in their home country because job titles and requirements in their field are different in the United States. On account of a lengthy licensing process or a need for immediate employment, they may pursue other options that use their training and experience.



The key to finding alternative paths to a fulfilling career is to identify your skills (what you know how to do), knowledge (what you know), competencies (what you are good at), and aptitudes (what is easy for you to learn) that can be useful in a related or alternative career. These **transferable skills** are essential for career success and will enable you to adapt to changing circumstances, especially when your education and experience are from another country.

As you identify your transferable skills, it can be helpful to think about the difference between *hard skills* and *soft skills*. Employers place great value on *soft skills*, such as your ability to communicate, lead others, organize projects, and work effectively on a team—skills you probably already use on a daily basis. You can also apply your more technical *hard skills*, such as computer skills, foreign language fluency, and understanding specialized vocabulary, to a completely different career.

Soft skills in particular depend on your ease and ability to communicate in English, which can be a challenge when it is not your first language. In order for your soft skills to benefit you in a U.S. job search, you must practice both your written and spoken English, and familiarize yourself with English terminology that is specific to your field. You may want to consider taking a course or obtaining self-study materials that will teach you the vocabulary specific to working in your industry. Some offerings for learning English for dentistry are:

- Ireland, Robert. **A Dictionary of Dentistry**. Oxford University Press, 2010.
 - While written for native English speakers, this dictionary's definitions of over 4,000 terms specific to the field of dentistry can also be of great help to non-native speakers whose English is already at a fairly high level, but who need help learning industry specific vocabulary.

GLOSSARY

Transferable skills: Skills developed in one situation or occupation that can be transferred to another context.

- Evans, Virginia, et.al. **Career Paths: Dentistry**. Express Publishing, 2017.
 - This course of study covers three levels of difficulty, and includes reading, listening, speaking, and writing exercises. Includes an audio CD with both US and British English pronunciation.
- The **Occupational English Test (OET)** for Dentistry is an English test specific to dentistry, with listening, reading, writing, and speaking components. It is conducted in Australian English, but the vocabulary is much the same as that used in the U.S. The test itself can only be taken in New York (within the U.S.), but test preparation materials – including an **online test preparation course** - provided by the company can be useful study aids to help you learn and practice dentistry English. *Note: While this is a helpful resource for vocabulary in the field of dentistry, this exam is not accepted by dental schools in the U.S.*

Are you including your transferable skills on your résumé?

Dental health professionals typically have the following skills and expertise that could be applied to a different career:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Manual dexterity | • Interpersonal skills |
| • Medical knowledge | • Explaining complex information in simple language |
| • Assessing and evaluating complex situations | • Managing or working as part of a team of collaborative professionals |

Related and Alternative Careers in Dentistry

Why consider a different career?

Finding employment in a related or alternative job can:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Open doors to new career possibilities. | • Grow your professional network in the United States. |
| • Provide income while you work toward your license. | • Help you gain American work experience. |

GLOSSARY

Professional network: Acquaintances with whom you stay in contact based on professional rather than personal connections.

If you have spent many years committed to an occupation, it is understandable to feel that your career—just like your relationships, hobbies, and beliefs—is a key part of your identity. It is not unusual to experience a sense of identity loss or failure at having to explore a **new career path**. In the United States, however, going back to school to switch careers is quite common.

Some of the careers described in this section require additional education or training. It is possible to find options that take only a few months, as well as more in-depth options that can take a year or more.

Examples of Related Careers

Some healthcare careers do not require you to be licensed or certified. These are ideal options for internationally-licensed dentists who want to continue working in the field of healthcare but do not want to undergo the relicensing process, or who want to work while relicensing in the United States.

Healthcare Interpreter

- Help patients with limited English proficiency communicate with doctors, dentists, nurses, and other medical staff.
- Requires a strong grasp of medical terminology in both languages, along with cultural sensitivity.
- Often self-employed.
- Minimum requirements vary by state and most states do not require certification.
- There are two national certifications for healthcare interpreters: The **Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI)** and the **National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters (NBCMI)**.

Case Study: Dimitra



Dimitra Kalogera is a 32-year-old endodontist with two degrees from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece. Her English was already very good when she moved to New York, and she initially hoped to obtain U.S. licensure and continue practicing dentistry. However, an unexpected hand injury left her without the mobility and stability she needed to perform delicate dental procedures. Forced to reassess her career options, Dimitra focused on achieving English fluency, as she knew that would be crucial to pursuing any profession in the U.S. She signed up for an advanced English course, as well as a basic literature course at her local community college. When a fellow Greek immigrant friend with limited English asked Dimitra to accompany him to a dental appointment so she could translate for him, Dimitra learned that dental interpretation was an actual career path, and she decided to learn more about it. Having grown up bilingual with a French mother, Dimitra was already used to switching between languages, and her deep understanding of dental terminology gave her a professional advantage. With three languages at her command, Dimitra began approaching dental practices in her largely Greek neighborhood to offer her interpretation services; she also found some work with a dental clinic in a neighborhood with a large population of francophone African immigrants. As a freelance interpreter, Dimitra has to work hard at securing jobs, but she likes the freedom and flexibility that come with setting her own schedule. Now that she has experience in the field, Dimitra is thinking of signing up for a medical interpretation certificate course, so that she can look for work in other healthcare settings as well.

Dental Consultant

- Provide advice and insight to dental practices regarding matters of insurance, claims policies, network management, and standards of care.³²
- May also offer support regarding the human resources and business management aspects of dental practice.
- Coach all members of dental teams – dentists, hygienists, assistants, and office staff – in best practices.
- Certification not required, but the American Association of Dental Consultants (AADC) offers a Certified Dental Consultant credential. You must hold a dental license in order to take the certification exam, but your international license may be sufficient. Contact the **AADC** to find out if your license qualifies.

Dental Products or Pharmaceutical Sales Representative

- Sell dental products or pharmaceuticals to dental practices, medical practices, and hospitals on behalf of wholesalers or manufacturers.
- Establish and maintain relationships with customers, explain about the products you are selling, answer questions about the products, and negotiate prices and terms of sale.
- At least a bachelor's degree usually required.
- Certification not required, but the Manufacturers' Representatives Educational Research Foundation offers a **Certified Sales Professional (CSP)** certification.

Pharmacy Technician

- Help pharmacists dispense prescription medication to customers or healthcare professionals.
- Work in pharmacies, which can be located in grocery stores, drug stores, hospitals, and healthcare facilities.
- A high school diploma is required to become a pharmacy technician. Training is provided on the job, and many states require pharmacy technicians to pass an exam or short formal education program.
- Certification not required, but the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board offers a **Certified Pharmacy Technician (CPhT)** credential.

Examples of Alternative Careers

Alternative careers are careers outside of the field of dentistry in which you can use the skills and knowledge you gained as a dentist.

Consider these types of careers if you are interested in exploring a different career path.

Technical Writer

- Prepare instruction manuals, how-to guides, journal articles, and other resources to clearly communicate complex information.
- Work in a variety of industries.
- A college degree is usually required, as well as experience or expertise in a specific subject.

Health Insurance Claims Specialist

- Apply knowledge of medical terminology and diagnostic coding to process medical insurance claims and resolve billing issues.
- A high school diploma is sufficient, but employers typically prefer to hire candidates with bachelor's degrees.

Community Health Worker

- A trusted member of the community who serves as a liaison between community and social/health services.

- Responsibilities may include outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support and advocacy
- Some employers require only a high school diploma, while others require a college degree. Not a licensed profession. On-the-job training often provided.

Medical Transcriptionist

- Convert voice recordings made by physicians and other healthcare workers into written reports.
- May also go over medical documents made with speech recognition technology, and edit them.
- Post-secondary education required, usually a one year certificate program. Associate degree programs are also available.
- Certification not required, although the **Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity** offers Registered Healthcare Documentation Specialist (RHDS) and Certified Healthcare Documentation Specialist (CHDS) certifications.

SMART GOAL WORKSHEET

Now that you have reviewed this guide, the next step is to think about your career plan. We recommend using Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Based (SMART) goals. You can use this SMART goal template to help you identify your next steps.

GOAL	SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ACHIEVABLE	RELEVANT	TIME-BASED
What do you want to achieve?	Who? What? Why? Where? When?	How much? How often? How many?	Can it be done?	Is it relevant to your ultimate vision?	When?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES IN THE FIELD OF DENTISTRY

You can explore the following helpful resources for more information on education, employment, licensing, and financial assistance to pursue a career in the field of dentistry.

Educational Resources

- **The American Dental Education Association (ADEA)** maintains webpages for both prospective dental students and current dental students and residents, including information for dental hygiene students.
- International dental graduates can apply to many advanced standing programs with one standardized application through the ADEA's **Centralized Application for Advanced Placement for International Dentists (ADEA CAAPID)**. If the program you are interested in does not participate in ADEA CAAPID, contact that school to get information on how to apply.
- The **American Student Dental Association** is an organization run by and for dental students. Among many other resources, they offer a list of **tips for international dental students**.
- To be eligible for licensure, your dental program must be accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). Use the CODA **search tool** to find accredited programs, including dental hygiene, dental assisting, and dental laboratory technology programs.

Career/Employment Resources

- The **American Dental Association** offers a **career center** with searchable job listings, a **guide** to planning your dental career and earning licensure after graduating dental school, a listing of **sample resumes**, and a **blog** for new dentists.
- The ASDA offers a career **webpage**, including extensive information about writing a CV and interviewing for dental jobs. They also offer a sample resume.
- **ExploreHealthCareers** offers comprehensive information about a wide variety of health careers, as well as a jobs board.
- **ResumeOK.com** provides resume examples and templates for healthcare professionals, including dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants.

Licensing Resources

- The American Dental Hygienists Association offers **licensure information** for internationally trained dental hygienists, as well as a **comprehensive guide** to the National Board Dental Hygiene Examination (NBDHE) required for licensure.

- The ADA offers **state licensure tables** with state by state licensure information, an explanation of **pathways to licensure**, and an **e-book** on State Licensure for the International Dentists which is available for purchase.
- **Upwardly Global's Professional Licensing Guides** provide licensing information for Calif, Ill., Mich., N.H., and N.Y.

Financial Resources

- The Office of the U.S. Department of Education provides **resources for eligible non-U.S. citizens**.
- The Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation maintains a list of **Education and Training Scholarships for New Americans**. Some are specific to Maryland residents, but many are open to applicants living anywhere in the U.S.

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Transferable Skills and Using Them in Related or Alternative Careers

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Our Expertise. Your Success.

 wes.org/partners/global-talent-bridge

 gtb@wes.org

WES Global Talent Bridge is a program dedicated to helping skilled immigrants fully utilize their talents and education in the United States. Global Talent Bridge joins with institutional partners and community organizations to help skilled immigrants leverage their training, achieve their professional goals, and contribute their talents to their full potential.

Global Talent Bridge provides technical assistance, staff training and specialized resources to community organizations, adult education programs, government agencies and academic institutions so they can better support, advise and integrate highly-qualified immigrants. It also conducts research and policy advocacy efforts to advance opportunities for skilled immigrants at the local, state and national level.

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Decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, curved green lines at the bottom of the page.