

# *Frequently Asked Questions...*

## *... About Independent Practice Dental Hygiene*

### *Business*

**Q. If I become an IPDH and start my own business can I employ other hygienists?**

A. An IPDH can employ another IPDH, however, an IPDH may not employ an RDH (Registered Dental Hygienist).

**Q. If I become an IPDH and start my own business can I employ a dentist?**

A. No.

**Q. If I become an IPDH and start my own business can I employ a dental assistant? If so, what tasks can a dental assistant perform?**

A. Yes you may employ a dental assistant, however, while in the employ of an IPDH a dental assistant cannot perform any of the duties listed in Chapter 3: Rules Relating to Dental Assistants of the “Laws and Rules Relating to the Practice of Dentistry, Dental Hygiene, and Denturism M.R.S.A. Title 32, Chapter 16 and Rules of the Board of Dental Examiners”. Duties listed in Chapter 3 may only be performed by a dental assistant under the direct or general supervision of a Maine licensed dentist. Tasks, outside of Chapter 3, that would be allowable are patient scheduling, seating a patient, and room cleaning.

**Q. If I become an IPDH can I still work for a dentist in a dental practice?**

A. Yes.

**Q. What about liability and malpractice insurance?**

A. First, check your own insurance policies to see if you are covered already for the situation in which you will be practicing. If you’re not covered, the ADHA can be used as a resource for obtaining affordable insurance. They may be contacted at 1-800-503-9230. Another source of appropriate insurance is HPSO (Healthcare Providers Service Organization): 1-800-982-9491.

### *Equipment*

**Q. Can I purchase equipment (e.g. an x-ray machine)?**

A. You may purchase, own, or lease equipment necessary for the performance of Independent Practice Dental Hygiene. You may only take x-rays if you hold Public Health Supervision Status and only on those clients who fall under your PHS project.

### *Insurance Companies that are Out of State*

**Q. Are out of state insurance companies required to recognize me as a dental hygiene provider?**

A. You may wish to refer them to Title 24 § 2317.B Applicability of Provisions (12-E) Title 24-A, sections 2765 and 2847-Q.

## *Licensure*

- Q. Will my Registered Dental Hygienist (RDH) license automatically convert to an Independent Practice Dental Hygienist (IPDH) license?**
- A. No. As with all other licensure categories there is an application process to be undertaken before this license may be granted to an individual; the application is available on our Forms & Applications Page or by contacting the staff office.
- Q. Can I be, both, a Registered Dental Hygienist and an Independent Practice Dental Hygienist?**
- A. No. A Registered Dental Hygienist license issued by the Maine Board of Dental Examiners (MBDE) automatically expires upon issuance of an Independent Practice Dental Hygiene license to the same person.
- Q. Upon becoming a Registered Dental Hygienist I immediately began working under Public Health Supervision status (PHS); can I calculate and use these hours toward meeting the criteria for independent practice?**
- A. No. The work hours of clinical practice accumulated to meet the criteria for IPDH must be earned in a private dental practice or non-profit dental clinic under the direct or general supervision of a dentist. A PHS supervising dentist does not qualify you to meet the criteria.
- Q. What is the continuing education requirement for an IPDH?**
- A. You must complete 30 hours of continuing education in the 2 years preceding the application for renewal.
- Q. Where do I find a list of allowable duties?**
- A. Refer to the “Laws and Rules Relating to the Practice of Dentistry, Dental Hygiene, and Denturism M.R.S.A. Title 32, Chapter 16 and Rules of the Rules of the Board of Dental Examiners”. Scope of practice for Independent Practice Dental Hygienists can be found in Subchapter 3-B 32§1094-Q of the statutes. Scope of practice for Public Health Supervision status can be found in Chapter 2: Rules Relating to Dental Hygienists, Section III. B.(2). Scope of practice for Registered Dental Hygienists can be found in Chapter 2: Rules Relating to Dental Hygienists, Section I. ‘General Supervision of Dental Hygienists’ and Section II. ‘Direct Supervision of Dental Hygienists’. **As always, you may perform only the duties listed in the scope of practice sections.**

*Plans for an ‘at a glance’ visual tool showing scope of practice are in the works; upon completion you will be able to refer to the ‘Scope of Practice Grid’ that will be available on our website*

## *Miscellaneous Topics*

- Q. As an IPDH am I allowed to dispense antibiotics (e.g. Arestin)?**
- A. No.
- Q. As an IPDH am I allowed to administer topical anesthesia (e.g. Oraquix)?**
- A. Yes.

**Q. As a medical practice interested in employing a hygienist, do you suggest that we hire an IPDH or a Registered Dental Hygienist with PHS status?**

A. Independent Practice Dental Hygienists and Registered Dental Hygienists each have their own ‘scope of practice’. Registered Dental Hygienists work under the direct and general supervision of a Dentist. Independent Practice Dental Hygienists may practice without supervision by a dentist to the extent permitted by statute. Public Health Supervision Status is associated with a hygiene license and allows hygienists to go out into the community to provide services. Both, independent practice and registered dental hygienists can access and make use of public health supervision status but it must be clearly defined as to which status they are using for patients (example given: use Monday, Wednesday, Friday as Independent Practice days and Tuesday, Thursday as Public Health Supervision days); there should be signage indicating when public health status is being utilized. There is also a ‘scope of practice’ assigned to public health status. You would want to read the scope of practice for each and determine which would best suit your needs. Under current statute and rules either would be allowable.

**Q. Can a medical practice bill for services and pay the dental hygienist a salary, even if they are an IPDH?**

A. Yes.

### *Permits*

**Q. I am a Registered Dental Hygienist with a Local Anesthesia permit (LAN) and a Nitrous Oxide permit (NOX); if I become an Independent Practice Dental Hygienist will my permits become null and void or can I continue to administer local anesthesia and nitrous oxide under my Independent Practice Dental Hygiene license?**

A. Your permits will continue to be valid; however, local anesthesia and nitrous oxide may only be administered under the direct supervision of a Maine licensed dentist.

### *Public Health Supervision Status...Supervising Dentists...and Maine Care Issues*

**Q. As an RDH I have made use of Public Health Supervision Status; if I become an IPDH can I still utilize PHS status?**

A. Yes, you must submit a notification form with standing orders from your supervising dentist, be assigned a project number and submit reports in the same manner as an RDH.

**Q. Do both an IPDH and a PHS need a supervising dentist:**

A. Public Health Supervision Hygienists work under a supervising dentist as defined in Rules-Chapter 2, Section III., item B. (1). Should an IPDH seek PHS status, they would need a supervising dentist for those days that public health supervision status is used to see PHS patients. Independent Practice Dental Hygienists may perform only those duties listed in their scope of practice without supervision by a dentist, however, an IPDH may choose to continue to practice under the supervision of a dentist.

**Q. Is the Independent Practice Dental Hygienist required to refer their patients to the supervising dentist with whom they have a Public Health Supervision Agreement or can they refer patients to any dentist in the community?**

A. Not all Independent Practice Dental Hygienists will have a supervising dentist as not all of them will hold Public Health Supervision status. All Independent Practice Dental Hygienists must have a referral network, of dental health professionals, in place as defined by Board policies. This network should include individuals able to handle conditions outside the scope of practice of an IPDH (e.g. restorative dentists and specialists such as oral surgeons, periodontists, endodontists, orthodontists, and denturists).

**Q. If I utilize PHS status as an IPDH and my patients are eligible for Maine Care, can I seek reimbursement for my services? What, if anything, do I need to do?**

A. In order to receive reimbursement Maine Care policies require you to be enrolled as a Maine Care provider. To submit claims to Maine Care, you will need to do the same kind of record-keeping you would do in a dental office. To become a Maine Care provider you will need to contact them directly; you will also need to complete a provider application and become approved. The following contact information may be helpful to you:

**Provider Relations Unit may be reached by calling 1-800-321-5557 option 8**

- Enrollment and Out of State providers: 1-800-321-5557 Option 6 or (207)287-4082.
- Billing: 1-800-321-5557 option 8 or (207)287-3094.
- Policy: 1-800-321-5557 option 8 or (207)287-9368. Your call will then be directed to the appropriate provider relations specialist.

[http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oms/providerfiles/provider\\_enrollment.html](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oms/providerfiles/provider_enrollment.html)

Maine Care is transitioning to MIHMS (Maine Integrated Health Management Solution), a HIPAA compliant Management Information System that will process claims when it is fully implemented in 2010 so you may find this website helpful as well.

- <https://mainecare.maine.gov/Default.aspx>

**Q. Can an IPDH and a PHS both treat Maine Care patients, self pay patients, and privately insured patients, if they don't have access to a dental home?**

A. As far as treatment is concerned the answer is yes; billing is another matter. Additionally, public health supervision status was created to provide care to those without access to care thus the project must fill a need not currently being met. It is the responsibility of the dental hygienist to have an appropriate referral network for dental care

### *Radiographs*

**Q. Can either an IPDH or PHS take x-rays?**

A. Taking radiographs is not within the scope of practice for an IPDH. A hygienist with public health supervision status may take x-rays provided they have written standing orders from a dentist who is available to interpret the x-rays within 21 days (hygienists are not allowed to diagnose). Should an IPDH hold public health supervision status they would be able to take x-rays on those days that were designated as PHS days for patients being seen under public health supervision status. Conversely they would be unable to take x-rays on days they were seeing dental hygiene patients as an IPDH.

### *Referral Network Providers*

**Q. If an IPDH approaches our office in an effort to have us become part of their referral network, are we obligated to do so?**

A. No

**Q. When an IPDH refers a patient to our office these patients will require comprehensive examinations and radiographs. By providing these services does the patient become an established patient of record at our dental office?**

A. Yes, for those dental procedures that were provided in your office.

**Q. What is our responsibility in terms of record keeping for visits performed outside of our office?**

A. None

**Q. Do we have to keep a record of all prophylaxis performed by the IPDH?**

A. No

**Q. What is the scope of emergency services the IPDH can perform at her office?**

A. The scope of practice of an IPDH is defined by Board statute, Title 32 M.R.S.A. §1094-Q, which can be found on the Board's website at <http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/32/title32sec1094-Q.html>

**Q. Is our office required to provide emergency services to patients of an IPDH that we have a collaborative relationship with?**

A. ??

**Q. What is the proper way to enter and exit the patient relationship?**

A. As you would for any other patient in your practice. This would include a written notice be sent with any termination of the patient/doctor relationship in accordance with Board policy entitled "Patient Dismissal from a Dental Practice" which can be found on the Board's website at <http://www.mainelegislature.org/forms/BoardPolicies.pdf>

**Q. Do we need to create a contract to document the scope of our relationship or is a verbal agreement enough to cover all the different facets of our relationship?**

A. The Board takes no position on the legalities of any oral or written contracts or agreements.

**Q. What happens if a patient, referred to us by an IPDH, decides that if they are going to come to our office or restorative services they would prefer to have all their services provided at one office rather than returning to the dental hygiene practice?**

A. It is a patient's right to determine where they will seek care.

## *Reimbursement*

**Q. How do I seek reimbursement for my services from those patients that are self pay clients?**

A. It can be as simple as having them write a check or you may want to get set up to accept credit card payments.

**Q. How do I seek reimbursement for my services from those patients that are privately insured?**

An IPDH can sign up with an insurance company as a provider similar to becoming a Maine Care provider. An easier method would be to have the patient self pay and provide them with a copy of their statement detailing the appropriate dental codes for submission to their insurance company for reimbursement. Many dental offices submit the appropriate forms to their patient's insurance companies for them as a courtesy.