

Frequently Asked Questions...

... About Public Health Supervision Status for Registered Dental Hygienists

What is the difference between Public Health Supervision Status and General Supervision?

The difference is that the hygienist practices in a setting other than a traditional dental practice, such as a school, a nursing home, at a community event, in a medical facility. In addition, the hygienist is providing services to people who otherwise would be unlikely to receive them, through a program or project that is intended to fill an unmet need. All duties allowed under General Supervision may be provided under Public Health Supervision status. The relationship between the dentist and hygienist is not employer/employee; that is the dentist is not responsible for workers compensation, OSHA rights, etc.

What do I need to do to request Public Health Supervision Status? Will it cost me anything extra?

Contact the Maine State Board of Dental Examiners and ask for a notification form/standing orders form. Write to the Board at 143 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333, call 207-287-3333, or e-mail dental.board@maine.gov. You may also visit the Forms and Applications page of the Board's website at www.mainedental.org. There is no charge for the notification form and there is no charge to have Public Health Supervision status. Standing orders must be completed for each project and the form must be signed by your supervising dentist. You may use the form provided or create your own standing orders form as long as it is specific to the project, contains a list of services to be provided, is signed by the supervising dentist and lists the name and license number of the associated hygienist and dentist.

I'm concerned about the paperwork. Why do we need to notify the Board and why do we need to file reports?

There is paperwork: a notification form and standing orders at the beginning and a summary report when each activity concludes. A notification form is needed because the hygienists will be practicing in settings other than a traditional dental practice. The notification form and report together will result in more accurate and up-to-date monitoring of the use of Public Health Supervision by the Board of Dental Examiners, and by the Departments of Professional and Financial Regulation and Human Services, which both maintain a high degree of interest in how, when, and where Public Health Supervision Status is used.

What about liability and malpractice insurance?

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 offers affordable insurance to members. They may be contacted at 1-800-503-9230. Another source of appropriate insurance is HPSO (Healthcare Providers Service Organization): 1-800-982-9491. Liability insurance is not *required* when working under Public Health Supervision Status.

Who pays for any equipment I need, or for any supplies?

You may need to use your own instruments, or choose to do so, if the program you're working in involves that level of care. The agency for which you are providing services (whether as an employee or through some other arrangement) should be working with you to determine what the needs of the program are for equipment and supplies and how any costs will be covered. You should not assume that you are responsible. [NOTE: the Maine Oral Health Program has a **limited** supply of portable dental equipment, including patient chairs, operator stools, lights, sealant units and compressors, which you may be able to borrow at no charge, but this equipment is often in great demand. If you want to borrow any equipment, you **must** reserve it ahead of time (during the school year, at least 4 weeks ahead is recommended). It can be shipped to you, but due to shipping expenses and the nature of the equipment, it is suggested that you try to

make arrangements to pick it up; the Oral Health Program will work with you on this. You will be responsible for returning it in a very timely fashion.

The rules refer to a Public Health Supervision Agreement. What is this? Is there a form I can get?

There is no set format for this Agreement and there is no requirement to submit it to the Board. This is an agreement between the hygienist and the supervising dentist. They may choose to put something in writing, or they may decide that a verbal agreement is sufficient.

The rules say there must be an appropriate level of contact communication, collaboration, and so on between the supervising dentist and the hygienist. What is “appropriate?”

The “appropriate level” is not defined by the rules. This may differ from one dentist to another, from one hygienist to another, and from one Public Health Supervision Agreement to another, based on the two parties’ knowledge of each other and the proposal, project, or program for which Public Health Supervision Status will be utilized.

How can I give the patient or guardian a “plan for referral” if my supervising dentist doesn’t have any responsibility? Am I obligated to find dentists who will see Public Health Supervision patients?

No -- You are obligated to provide the patient (or guardian) with some type of report that indicates your findings (if applicable) and whether or not the patient should seek further dental care. A sample referral form is available as a model and is included in this packet. Also included is a sample radiographic review and findings form.

If I can’t find a dentist who will be my supervising dentist, the rules say the Board will assist me in finding one. How does this work?

First you need to contact the Board. Explain that you haven’t been able to find a supervising dentist and provide a brief description of your project. The Board will handle these requests on a case by case basis and hopes that this can be done quickly so your project and your involvement won’t be delayed. If the Board can’t find someone to serve as your supervising dentist, one of the Board members will be asked to consider doing so.

The rules and the overview state that a hygienist can be paid for providing hygiene services under Public Health Supervision. Who pays?

Dental hygienists providing services under Public Health Supervision may be compensated for their work by salary, honoraria, and other mechanisms by the employing or sponsoring entity. The “entity” can be a school, a hospital, a nursing home, a community agency, or an individual such as a health provider, as described in the rules.

The rules and the overview state that the organization for which I provide hygiene services under Public Health Supervision can seek reimbursement for these services. Many of the patients I’ll be seeing are eligible for Medicaid. How will this organization get reimbursed by Medicaid? What, if anything, do I need to do?

Maine’s MaineCare policy will allow for hygienist services to be reimbursed to entities enrolled as MaineCare providers employing or sponsoring licensed hygienists providing hygienist services covered by MaineCare and under Public Health Supervision. If the entity for which you provide services decides to submit claims to MaineCare, you will need to do the same kind of record-keeping you would do in a dental office. The entity that submits the claims to MaineCare will also need to provide documentation that your services were provided under Public Health Supervision. A print out from the MBDE website displaying your Public Health Supervision activity, ID number, and status would be acceptable.