

Washington's Health Workforce Sentinel Network Examples of Findings from Dentist Offices/Dental Clinics

Representatives from dentist offices and dental clinics provided information to the Washington State Health Workforce Sentinel Network eight times between Summer 2016 and Spring 2020. This summary highlights some of the information they provided, with an emphasis on the most recently submitted data. Additional findings from dentist offices and dental clinics can be found on the Sentinel Network dashboard (wa.sentinelnetwork.org) as well as for other types of health care facilities. In addition to these findings, a summary of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on dentists' offices/dental clinics' workforce and operations can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/WADental>.

Dentist Offices/Dental Clinics - Occupations with exceptionally long vacancies: 2018-2020

Top occupations cited as having exceptionally long vacancies by date of reporting					
Rank	Summer 2018	Spring 2019	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	
1	Dental assistant	Dental hygienist	Dental assistant	Dental hygienist	← Most cited
2	Dental hygienist	Dental assistant	Dental hygienist	Dental assistant	
3	Dentist	Dentist	Dentist	Dentist	
				Office personnel	
4	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Office personnel	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	Multiple occupations cited at same frequency	

Reasons for vacancies reported by dentist offices/dental clinics (Spring 2020 examples)

- [Dental assistant] Very difficult to find adequately trained dental assistant. The local community college recently discontinued their dental assisting program.
- [Dental assistant] More assisting schools or removal of the school requirement would help increase the number of assistants in the region.
- [Dental hygienist] For the last few years there have not been enough hygienists to even help with temporary assignments.
- [Dental hygienist] There are a great number of offices employing multiple hygienists. Many hygienists are working part time rather than full time so need is greater.
- [Multiple occupations] Offices closed to elective procedures due to COVID 19

Dentist Offices/Dental Clinics

New occupations or new roles reported by dentist offices/dental clinics (Spring 2020 examples)

- [Dentist] Working without a dental assistant.
- [Dental Hygienist] Doing front office work while closed for routine care.
- [Dental Assistant] More physical cleaning of the office compared to outside janitorial support.
- [Administrative Personnel] New role organizing teledentistry encounters between the dentist and patients.

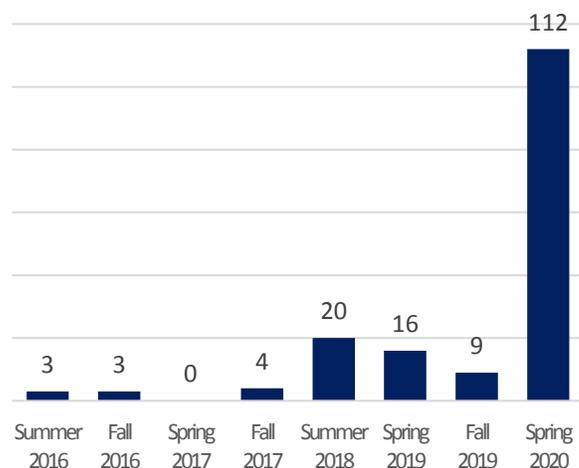
Changes in dentist office/dental clinic priorities regarding orientation/onboarding for new employees and training for existing/incumbent workers (Spring 2020 examples)

- [Multiple Occupations] Infection control enhancements due to Covid-19.
- [Multiple Occupations] There will be many new safety and PPE additions to the office that we will need updated training for once we begin working again.
- [Multiple Occupations] Due to the shortage of qualified employees everyone has to be cross trained.

Reasons for worker retention/turnover problems reported by dentist offices/dental clinics (Spring 2020 examples)

- [Multiple Occupations] We were unable to match or beat the compensation offered by other employers.
- [Dental Hygienist] Many hygienists leave due to work-related disabilities caused by job.
- [Dental Hygienist] Due to fears about COVID, one of my dental hygienists may not return to work and need to be replaced.

Number of Sentinel Network Responses from Dentist Offices/Dental Clinics in WA by Data Collection Date



Number of Dentist Office/Dental Clinic Responses by Accountable Community of Health (ACH) (Spring 2020)



About the Washington Health Workforce Sentinel Network

The Sentinel Network links the healthcare sector with policymakers, workforce planners and educators to identify and respond to changing demand for healthcare workers, with a focus is on identifying newly emerging skills and roles required by employers. The Sentinel Network is an initiative of Washington's Health Workforce Council, conducted collaboratively by Washington's Workforce Board and the University of Washington's Center for Health Workforce Studies. Funding to initiate the Sentinel Network came from the Healthier Washington initiative, with ongoing support from Governor Inslee's office and the Washington State Legislature.

Why become a Sentinel? As a Sentinel, you can:

- Communicate your workforce needs and ensure that the state is prepared to respond to the transforming healthcare environment.
- Have access to current and actionable information about emerging healthcare workforce needs.
- Compare your organization's experience and emerging workforce demand trends with similar employer groups.

To view an interactive summary of findings and to provide information from your organization: www.wa.sentinelnetwork.org.

Contact: healthworkforce@wasentinelnetwork.org