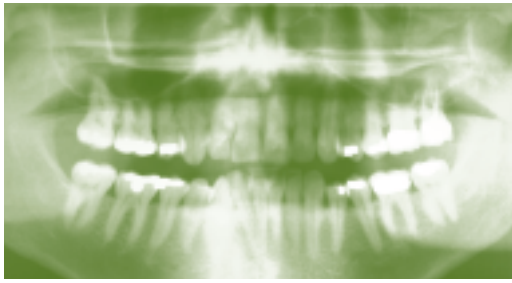
American Dental Association
www.ada.org

American Dental Association
Office of Student Affairs
211 East Chicago Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611
312.440.7470
student affairs@ada.org

American Dental Association
www.ada.org

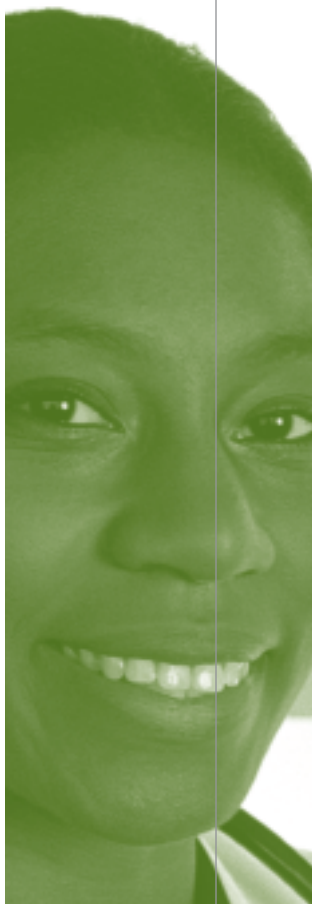
Understanding Organized Dentistry



A Guide for Dental Schools and Dental Students

The ADA is the professional association of dentists committed to the public's oral health, ethics, science and professional advancement; leading a unified profession through initiatives in advocacy, education, research and the development of standards.

That's the mission of the American Dental Association! Public health, sound science, ethical professional behavior, and continuous improvement in dental care are what the ADA stands for. Through the ADA, we stand together as a profession, working to represent dentistry and the public in our advocacy initiatives, to foster excellence in dental education, to promote dental research, and to facilitate development of standards.



As a professional association, the ADA is unique. More than seven out of ten dentists in the United States are ADA members. Other national associations-those serving health care providers, physicians, attorneys, for example-have membership participation rates that are much lower than the ADA.

ADA members receive a wide variety of membership benefits, both tangible and intangible. In many ways, all dentists, dental professionals, and the public benefit from ADA advocacy efforts. Examples include increased funding for research, dental care for under-served populations, and public health initiatives such as water fluoridation and community education. The ADA Seal of Acceptance program gives both the public and dental professionals information about the safety and effectiveness of consumer products. And research at the ADA Paffenbarger Research Center in Bethesda, MD, has improved the quality of dental products.

Every member receives the monthly Journal of the American Dental Association, bimonthly newspaper ADA News, and access to the members-only content on the ADA website, ADA.org. ADA members also have access to a wide variety of professional and personal financial services; competitive group insurance and retirement programs; ADA Annual Session (the largest continuing education/dental exposition in the country); reduced rates on ADA Catalog products, Survey Center reports, and Library services; as well as other valuable resources.

ADA membership is inclusive of dentists in a wide variety of occupations, including private practice, academics, research, dental manufacturing, military and Public Health Service, among others. Affiliate membership is open to dentists in other countries, and a small number of non-dentists are also members in the associate or honorary categories.

Helping adults and children across America understand the importance of oral health is a big part of the American Dental Association. From "Dudley the Dinosaur" Public Service Announcements on Saturday morning cartoons to useful consumer information on ADA.org to the ADA's signature event, Give Kids A Smile Day, the ADA is out there, everyday!

The ADA — Its National Structure

The American Dental Association has more than 149,000 members and 53 constituent (state) and 545 component (local) dental societies. It is the largest and oldest national dental association in the world. The House of Delegates, the legislative body of the Association, is composed of 460 delegates representing the 53 constituent societies, five federal dental services and the American Student Dental Association. The House meets once a year during the Association's Annual Session.

The Board of Trustees, the administrative body of the Association, is composed of the president, the president-elect, two vice presidents and 17 trustees from each of the 17 trustee districts in the United States. The treasurer and executive director serve as ex officio (non-voting) members.

The Association's 11 councils serve as standing committees of the House of Delegatse. Councils make policy recommendations and complete assignments and tasks from the House or the Board of Trustees that fall within the scope of their Bylaws' duties. Most councils are composed of one member from each of the 17 trustee districts of the Association. In general, council members must be active, life or retired members in good standing of the Association. Most councils meet twice a year, either at the ADA Headquarters Office in Chicago or at the Washington D.C. office.

There are two commissions of the Association: the Commission on Dental Accreditation and the Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations. The Committee on the New Dentist is a standing committee of the ADA Board of Trustees and is charged with providing the Board with expertise on issues affecting new dentists.

ADA Councils and Commissions

Committee on the New Dentist

Because the ADA recognizes that the concerns and needs of a new dentist are unique, the ADA created the Special Committee on the Young Professional (CYP) in 1986. The Committee has since evolved, and is now a standing committee of the ADA Board of Trustees-the Committee on the New Dentist (CND). The CND is composed of one member from each of the 17 ADA trustee districts. It works to address issues that concern and impact new dentists (dentists out of school less than ten years), to involve new dentists in organized dentistry, and to help ensure new dentists' success in a rapidly changing world.

The CND serves new dentists in many ways. It gives the ADA Board of Trustees, Councils, and Commissions insight from the new dentist perspective. Each year, nine CND members serve as ex officio (non-voting) members to other ADA councils as well as the ADPAC board.

The New Dentist Committee Network (NDCN) is made up of 47 state and 160 local committees composed of and working for new dentists. This network provides a vital communication resource between the ADA and new dentists, as well as a forum for new dentists to discuss their issues and concerns.

A few of the more tangible initiatives the CND is responsible for are the annual ADA New Dentist Conference, the ADA New Dentist Transition and $mart $tart Programs, and the quarterly publication, ADA New Dentist News.

Commission on Dental Accreditation

The mission of the Commission on Dental Accreditation is to serve the public by establishing, maintaining and applying standards that ensure the quality and continuous improvement of dental and dental-related education and reflect the evolving practice of dentistry. The scope of the Commission on Dental Accreditation encompasses dental, advanced dental and allied dental education programs.

Dental education accreditation, initiated in the early 1900s, is conducted today by the Commission on Dental Accreditation, which operates under the auspices of the ADA. It is a peer review mechanism that includes the involvement of members of the discipline, the broad educational community, employers, practitioners, the dental licensing community and public members. All of these groups participate in a process designed to ensure educational quality.

Members of the commission are selected by the participating organizations; these selections are not subject to review by any other organization. There are 30 members on the Board of Commissioners. The commission membership reflects a wide geographic distribution and includes both genders and under-represented ethnic groups. Representation on the commission is as follows:

American Dental Association:
4 members

American Association of Dental Examiners:
4 members

American Dental Education Association:
4 members

Postdoctoral General Dentistry:
1 member

Recognized Dental Specialties (one each):
9 members

American Dental Assistants Association:
1 member

American Dental Hygienists' Association:
1 member

National Association of Dental Laboratories:
1 member

General Public:
4 members

Students:
1 member

The commissioner representing postdoctoral general dentistry is jointly selected by the American Dental Education Association and the American Association of Hospital Dentists. The commissioner representing students is jointly selected by the American Student Dental Association and the American Dental Education Association. All commissioners serve one four-year term, except for the student commissioner who serves one two-year term.

Activities for the commission include formulating and approving accreditation standards by which programs are evaluated; establishing policies and procedures for conducting the accreditation program; determining and publicizing program accreditation status; and appointing consultants and site visitors to assist in accreditation activities.

Council on Dental Education and Licensure

Until the early 1900s, dental education was not standardized and there were "dentists" with and without formal training delivering care to patients. Licensure was initiated by states to protect the public from those practitioners without adequate education. While the ADA recognizes and supports each state's right to regulate dental licensure, it has adopted policies on licensure issues, including freedom of movement for dentists, increased standardization of clinical licensing examinations, specialty licensure and the use of human subjects in clinical examinations. The policy-recommending agency of the ADA is the Council on Dental Education and Licensure (CDEL). CDEL is unique in that it is composed of eight members appointed by the ADA, four members appointed by the American Dental Education Association (ADEA), and four members appointed by the American Association of Dental Examiners (AADE). In addition, the ADA Committee on the New Dentist has an ex officio (nonvoting) member on the council and the American Student Dental Association provides a student consultant. CDEL studies and makes recommendations on policy for dental and allied dental education; dental licensure; recognition of special areas of dental practice; as well as monitoring and disseminating information on continuing dental education. The council also oversees career guidance activities related to recruitment and retention, especially underrepresented minorities into dentistry and allied dental careers.

Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations

Specific dental licensure requirements vary among jurisdictions, but all jurisdictions have three types of requirements: an educational requirement, a written examination requirement and a clinical examination requirement. The National Board Dental Examination is intended to fulfill or partially fulfill the written examination requirements, but acceptance of National Board scores is completely at the discretion of the individual state. The Joint Commission on National Dental Examinations (JCNDE) is the agency responsible for the development and administration of the National Board Dental Examinations. This 15-member Commission includes representatives of dental schools, dental practice, state dental examining boards, dental hygiene, dental students, and the public. A standing committee of the Joint Commission includes other dentists who act as consultants regarding this Examination.

The purpose of the JCNDE is to provide and conduct written examinations, exclusive of clinical demonstrations, for the purpose of assisting state boards in determining qualifications of dentists who seek licensure to practice in any state, district or dependency of the United States that recognizes the National Board Examinations.

Although written examinations may be developed at the local level, most licensing boards use the National Board Dental Examination (Parts I & II) as a major portion of their written examination requirement. Currently, all 53 United States licensing jurisdictions recognize National Board results. These jurisdictions include all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.

Council on Access, Prevention and Interprofessional Relations

The Council on Access, Prevention and Interprofessional Relations (CAPIR) is a primary ADA agency dedicated to broadening the scope of oral health care within the health care system, promoting preventive dentistry as a cornerstone of oral health care and advancing the delivery of oral health care to the public. CAPIR recommends policy, develops resources and formulates programs in the areas of: access to oral health services; community health activities; community water fluoridation and other preventive health activities; and health care facilities and interprofessional affairs.

Council on ADA Sessions

The Council on ADA Sessions (CAS) is the agency responsible for planning and producing the Annual Session of the Association, as well as other Association sessions or regional meetings. This council is made up of representatives from each of the 17 trustee districts with two ex officio appointments who are the local arrangement committee chair from the current site as well as next year's site.

Council on Communications

The Council on Communications (CC) is a primary ADA agency dedicated to promoting and conveying information on oral health care issues to the public, the Association members and the health care community. The council oversees the development of programs, supports related efforts of the ADA tripartite structure, and provides recommendations to the ADA's policy-making bodies on communication issues, including media relations and the image of dentistry.

Council on Dental Benefit Programs

The Council on Dental Benefit Programs (CDBP) is the ADA agency dedicated to promoting quality dental care through the development, promotion and monitoring of the dental benefit programs for the public, and by development and maintenance of dental coding systems and quality assessment and improvement tools and methodologies.

Council on Dental Practice

The Council on Dental Practice (CDP) is the agency responsible for formulating and recommending policies relating to dental practice. The council also develops educational and other programs to assist dentists in improved practice management, including practice marketing materials and continuing education seminars, and to assist constituent and component societies and other dental organizations in the development of such programs so that dentists may continue to improve the delivery of their services to the public. In addition, the council provides assistance, education and information on issues related to dentists' well being.

Council on Ethics, Bylaws and Judicial Affairs

The Council on Ethics, Bylaws and Judicial Affairs (CEBJA) is the ADA agency dedicated to enhancing the ethical conscience of dentists by promoting the highest moral, ethical and professional standards in the provision of dental care to the public. CEBJA is responsible for issuing advisory opinions to the ADA Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct and serves as the ADA's appellate body in the tripartite member disciplinary system. The council provides the ethics component of the ADA SUCCESS program for junior and senior dental students and promotes dental ethics through a quarterly feature in the Journal of the American Dental Association.

Council on Government Affairs

The Council on Government Affairs (CGA) recommends policies related to legislative and regulatory issues, including the formulation of proposed federal legislation. The council also disseminates information to assist constituent and component societies on state legislative and regulatory matters. The CGA is the Association's liaison with agencies of the federal government, especially those agencies that employ dental personnel.

Council on Members Insurance and Retirement Programs

The Council on Members Insurance and Retirement Programs (CMIRP) is the agency whose duties include evaluating and making recommendations on a continuing basis related to all Association-sponsored insurance programs. The council examines and evaluates other insurance programs that might be beneficial to members. The council also assists constituent societies in matters related to insurance programs. Members of the council also serve as trustees for the American Dental Association Members Retirement Program.

Council on Membership

The Council on Membership (CM) formulates and recommends policies related to member recruitment and retention and other related issues. The council works closely with constituent and component dental societies to support, monitor and encourage tripartite membership activities and to enhance cooperation and communication on tripartite recruitment and retention efforts. In addition, the Council on Membership recommends, monitors and supports the development of membership benefits and services that respond to identified needs of members.

Council on Scientific Affairs

The ADA's Council on Scientific Affairs (CSA) serves the public and the profession as the primary resource on the science of dentistry. The CSA provides recommendations to the ADA's policy-making bodies on scientific issues. The council also promotes and conducts studies on scientific matters.

Understanding the Tripartite

The American Dental Association has an unusual structure. For more than 90 years, the American Dental Association, together with state and local dental societies, has functioned as a three-tiered system called the tripartite. While retaining their autonomy as dental associations, the national, state (constituent) and local (component) organizations work together for members. With only a few exceptions, ADA members hold membership at all three levels.

For example, if a dentist practices in Chicago, s/he would be a member of the Chicago Dental Society, the Illinois State Dental Society, and the national ADA. In most locations, dentists pay their dues through the constituent dental society.

Tripartite membership is mutually supportive, allowing each society to concentrate on providing those services it performs best and most efficiently. It helps provide a consistent voice in lobbying activities, supports uniform educational standards, promotes ethical dental practice, and allows for the coordination of activities.

Each level of membership offers special advantages and benefits to the dentist who invests in organized dentistry, and to the Association as a whole. The result of the tripartite system is a more comprehensive set of member and other services provided by those who can best provide those services. Together, the three tiers of organized dentistry become more than the sum of the parts!

A few of the many benefits and resources at the state and local level include journals and newsletters, health insurance, peer review, continuing education, legislative lobbying, patient referral services, state meetings, and social activities.

Membership Dues

Depending upon the location, full tripartite dues for members will vary from about $900 to $1800; the ADA portion of that has most recently been in the $435 range. To help new graduates ease into active membership, the American Dental Association offers a reduced dues program for the national portion of dues. The first membership year out of dental school is $0, second year is 25% of full dues/assessment, third year is 50%, fourth year is 75%, and full dues/assessment begins in the fifth year. Students who go into a graduate program following dental school pay just $30 national dues/year and begin the reduced dues program following completion of their graduate education. The ADA Reduced Dues Program requires continuous membership. State and local dental societies also offer reduced dues for new graduates.

Just For Students

Let's face it, dental students have enough to worry about: graduation requirements, paying for school, and that looming licensure exam! Students can use all the help they can get. The ADA Office of Student Affairs (OSA) exists to assist dental student from the time they enter dental school to the time they begin their careers. The OSA can answer a student's questions or direct the student to find the answer. The OSA is also very proactive with its support for students. Over the years the OSA has developed numerous resources to assist dental students with the topics that seem to consume them the most including:

Financial Planning Issues for Dental Students. A publication to assist students in managing the impact of student debt, it is distributed by the dental schools to all incoming dental students.

Dental Recap. An e-newsletter sponsored by the ADA OSA and ASDA, Dental Recap goes out to all dental students with email addresses on file, providing news bites and highlights useful resources.

Student Communications. OSA sends informational mailings to all dental students three times each year. These mailings highlight topics of interest to dental students and applicable resources available from the ADA.

ADA InfoPaks. ADA information and resources of interest to dental students are available by request through OSA and online at ADA.org. Topics include Associateships, Managing Finances, Practice Management, Managed Care, Careers in Dentistry, to name a few.

Dental Boards and Licensure Information for the New Graduate. A publication to help dental students understand the clinical licensure process. It is distributed to senior dental students every fall and is available on the members-only pages of ADA.org.

Student Appointment Books. The student appointment books for use in the dental clinic are distributed prior to the beginning of the academic year for the year's junior and senior students to use in clinic.

Free $50,000 Life Insurance. The American Dental Association offers every student member a free $50,000 term life insurance policy until dental school graduation-all they have to do is sign up! (The thousands of members who participate in the ADA Term Life Plan cover the cost of student premiums.) Discounted disability insurance is also available to dental students, which can be easily converted to disability income protection after graduation. Go to www.insurance.ada.org or call 888-463-4545 for more information.

Dental School Programs

The American Dental Association offers several seminars for dental students.

New Dentist Transition Program

Sponsor: Committee on the New Dentist

A 90-minute program that assists senior dental students in making the transition from student member to active member. Students hear first-hand the importance of membership and talk with other New Dentists and representatives from organized dentistry. May be scheduled every year.

Getting Off To A $mart $tart

Sponsor: Committee on the New Dentist

A 90-minute program that focuses on the needs and concerns of first-year dental students and highlights ADA resources available to assist with their dental education. The program also includes the basics of financial planning for dentists. Attendees learn about credit, compound interest, and the impact of student debt. May be scheduled every year.

SUCCESS Program: Practice Management Segment

Sponsor: Council on Dental Practice

A day-long seminar which covers associateship considerations, leadership and management issues, office staffing, methods to value and purchase a practice, marketing strategies, indemnity plans, capitation plans and discounted preferred provider plans. Usually scheduled every other year.

SUCCESS Program: Ethics Component

Sponsor: Council on Ethics, Bylaws and Judicial Affairs

A half-day educational seminar designed to acquaint junior and senior dental students with the ethical aspects of starting a dental practice. A practicing dentist and ADA attorney present ethical dilemmas faced by new practitioners through lecture and case studies. Students are asked to apply the ADA Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct to current ethical dilemmas. Usually scheduled every other year.

Pizza & Politics

Sponsor: State Government Affairs

A 60-minute lunchtime presentation (length, time and format may be tailored to specific needs) which informs students about the impact of government policy and politics in a dental practice. The program also motivates them to be active participants in the political process both now and upon completion of their education. Scheduled on request.

ASDA to ADA: A Progressive Partnership

The American Student Dental Association (ASDA) is an independent national student-run organization that protects and advances the rights, interests, and welfare of students pursuing careers in dentistry. As an autonomous Association for students, it represents students with a unified voice and provides information, education, advocacy, and services. The association introduces lifelong involvement in organized dentistry, and promotes change for the betterment of the profession. As ASDA's mission is closely aligned with the goals of the ADA and its Office of Student Affairs, the associations work together in providing students with the resources and support they need during dental school and as they embark on their careers.

As a member of ASDA and the ADA, students are entitled to all of ASDA's publications, benefits, and services as well as all of the ADA's publications, benefits, and services. How is this possible on just $65 for national dues? Since only $5 of these dues are rebated to the ADA, ADA member dentists, knowing the significance membership has on one's education and career, subsidize the cost of providing benefits and services to student members.

ASDA and the ADA work together on the issues that affect dental students the most including dental licensure, financial issues, and advocacy in Washington. Some of ASDA's most noted benefits include Mouth, its quarterly journal, ASDA News, its monthly news resource, the ASDA Handbook: A Resource for Dental Students, ASDA's Guide to Postdoctoral Programs, and national board reprints. ASDA and the ADA have worked together and developed joint resources including Dental Boards and Licensure Information for the New Graduate and Dental Recap, the quarterly e-newsletter just for dental students. For a more comprehensive listing of benefits and resources please visit www.ADA.org/goto/student or www.ASDAnet.org.

Other National Dental Associations

The American Dental Association is the broad-based professional association for dentists, and is inclusive of the diverse occupations and perspectives of individuals throughout the profession. In order to most effectively represent the profession, the ADA works closely with the American Student Dental Association, the American Dental Education Association, the American Association of Dental Examiners. Other key collaborators are ethnic dental associations such as the National Dental Association, the Hispanic Dental Association, Indian Dental Association and others, as well as the American Association of Women Dentists. The Academy of General Dentistry and the specialty organizations for the ADA-recognized specialties are also important.

More information about these dental associations is available on their web sites. In addition, visit www.ada.org/organizations for a searchable listing of 127 known national dental organizations.

Alliance of the American Dental Association
www.allianceada.org

American Association of Dental Examiners
www.aadexam.org

American Dental Education Association
www.adea.org

American Student Dental Association
www.asdanet.org

American Association of Women Dentists
www.womendentists.org

Hispanic Dental Association
www.hdassoc.org

National Dental Association
www.ndaonline.org

Academy of General Dentistry
www.agd.org

American Association of Public Health Dentistry
www.aaphd.org

American Association of Endodontists
www.aae.org

American Academy of Oral & Maxillofacial Pathology
www.aaomp.org

American Academy of Oral & Maxillofacial Radiology
www.aaomr.org

American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
www.aaoms.org

American Association of Orthodontists
www.aaortho.org

American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
www.aapd.org

American Academy of Periodontology
www.perio.org

American College of Prosthodontists
www.prosthodontics.org