

DENTAL ASSISTANT: LICENSURE BY CREDENTIALS

Like most communities across the country, Minnesota faces a dental assistant workforce shortage. Dental practices have found it difficult to fill open dental assistant positions, for several reasons. One reason is that Minnesota law has barriers to licensure for potential out of state applicants, meaning some qualified dental assistants cannot find meaningful employment and dental clinics are unable to provide services to patients in need.

Minnesota law allows for out of state dental assistants to apply for licensure with the Minnesota Board of Dentistry based on their credentials in lieu of completing a board-approved dental assisting program, if the applicant meets certain criteria. One criteria is that the applicant must have graduated from a dental assisting program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) and be also certified by the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB).

The MDA's bill, HF2111 and SF1234, introduced by Representative Huot and Senator Kupec, would change the application criteria and allow dental assistants to apply for licensure by credentials regardless of whether they graduated from a CODA accredited program, so long as they are certified by DANB. Additionally, applicants of CODA accredited programs who are not certified by DANB would also be eligible to apply for licensure. Applicants would still be required to demonstrate that the Non CODA program is comparable to in-state CODA programs and meets all other Board of Dentistry requirements.

This bill simply expands the applicant pool to provide Minnesota with more candidates that may be qualified for licensure. It also more clearly articulates the Board of Dentistry's authority to recognize out of state non-CODA dental assisting programs for those seeking licensure by credentials.

The MDA has worked with the Board of Dentistry and other stakeholders to address the dental assisting workforce shortage via non-legislative options; however, this bill is one legislative change needed to help address the workforce shortage.

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