

DELTA COLLEGE
COUNSELING/ADVISING & CAREER SERVICES
DENTIST

Salary Range: \$68,990 to more than \$145,600

Personal Interests: Activities of a scientific and technical nature; helping people.

Work Environment: Small private offices or clinics.

Description

Dentists examine, diagnose, and treat patients who have diseases, injuries, deformities, pain or deficiencies of the teeth, gums, and mouth. They remove decay, fill cavities, examine x-rays, place protective plastic sealants on children's teeth, and repair fractured teeth. They also perform corrective surgery on gums and supporting bones to treat gum diseases. Dentists extract teeth and make models and measurements for dentures to replace missing teeth. They provide instruction on diet, brushing, flossing, use of fluorides, and other aspects of dental care. They also administer anesthetics and write prescriptions for antibiotics and other medications.

Dentists use a variety of equipment, including x-ray machines, drills, and instruments such as mouth mirrors, probes, forceps, brushes, and scalpels. They wear masks, gloves, and safety glasses to protect themselves and their patients from infectious diseases.

Dentists in private practice oversee a variety of administrative tasks, including bookkeeping and buying equipment and supplies. They may employ and supervise dental hygienists, dental assistants, dental laboratory technicians, or receptionists.

Working Conditions

Dentists work alone or with a dental hygienist, nurse, or dental assistant. They may establish their own practices, be part of a medical group, or work in hospitals or institutions. They generally work in clean, comfortable surroundings. Dentists may perform some of their own laboratory work in their own laboratories.

Dentists may work under physical strain since they must stand, or sit, for long periods

of time, frequently bending in awkward positions. Their work may also be performed under trying circumstances when patients are frightened, upset, or in pain.

Dentists in private practice usually determine their own working hours to suit their personal needs and the needs of their patients. Their average workweek is about 36 hours. Salaried dentists usually work 40 hours per week. Some dentists have evening or weekend hours.

Dentists who open their own practice must pay \$50,000 to \$75,000 for equipment and instruments. Thus, beginning dentists may first become partners with experienced dentists and delay setting up their own practice until they have saved enough money.

Training, Other Qualifications

A license to practice dentistry is required in all states. To apply for a license in Michigan, a candidate must have graduated from an accredited dental school and pass the 2-part written National Board dental exam and the written and clinical Northeast Regional Board dental exam. Dentists who wish to limit their practice to a specialty must first be licensed as a general dentist in Michigan and then obtain a special certificate after completing a specified amount of postgraduate study in that field and passing an examination. Certificates are issued by the Michigan Board of Dentistry.

A Professional Degree or Doctorate may qualify a person for this occupation. Most dentists have at least eight years of education beyond high school. The most common requirements for entering schools of dentistry to become a dentist include completing a pre-dental program or its

equivalent with an acceptable grade point average, applying through the American Association of Dental Schools Application Service (AADSAS), taking the Dental Admissions Test, and submitting other required letters and forms.

Pre-dentistry programs, like the one at Delta College, provide opportunities to gain the knowledge and skills required for admission to dental school. Many Michigan colleges and universities offer programs, which may satisfy the prerequisites for admission to dental schools. Prospective students should contact the dental schools of their choice for admission requirements and consult their school's pre-professional adviser to ensure that admission prerequisites will be met.

Job Outlook

Employment of dentists is projected to grow about as fast as average for all occupations through 2014. Although employment growth will provide some job opportunities, most jobs will result from the need to replace the large number of dentists expected to retire. Job prospects should be good as new dentists take over established practices or start their own.

Demand for dental care should grow substantially through 2014. As members of the baby-boom generation advance into middle age, a large number will need complicated dental work, such as bridges. In addition, elderly people are more likely to retain their teeth than were their predecessors, so they will require much more care than in the past. The younger generation will continue to need preventive checkups despite treatments such as fluoridation of the water supply, which decreases the incidence of tooth decay. However, employment of dentists is not expected to grow as rapidly as the demand for dental services. As their practices expand, dentists are likely to hire more

dental hygienists and dental assistants to handle routine services.

Earnings

Dentist's earnings vary according to location, type of practice, and the individual's number of years in practice. Dentist's entering private practice often earn little more than the minimum needed to cover expenses during the first year or two, but their earnings rise rapidly as their practices develop. On the average, salaried dentists earn somewhat less than self-employed dentists. Dentists who specialize, such as oral surgeons and periodontists, and those who work in large urban areas generally have the highest earnings. The annual average wage for general dentists in Michigan (2006) was \$162,580.

The estimated annual income (May 2006) of dentists in selected areas of Michigan was:

| Area | Annual Salary |
|--------------|----------------------|
| Ann Arbor | \$154,300 |
| Detroit | \$182,360 |
| Flint | \$173,390 |
| Grand Rapids | \$174,120 |
| Jackson | \$158,660 |
| Lansing | \$188,360 |
| Saginaw | \$151,750 |

Related Occupations

Chiropractors, optometrists, physicians and surgeons, psychologists, podiatrists, speech-language pathologists, and veterinarians.

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Sources: Occupational Outlook Handbook, Michigan Occupational Information System, 2006 Michigan Occupational Wage Estimates

Career Center, D132
Bay City/Saginaw: (989) 686-9072
Midland/Auburn: (989) 495-4000, Ext. 9072
Frankenmuth, Birch Run, Reese & Vassar: (989) 758-3400
<http://www.delta.edu/careercenter>

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