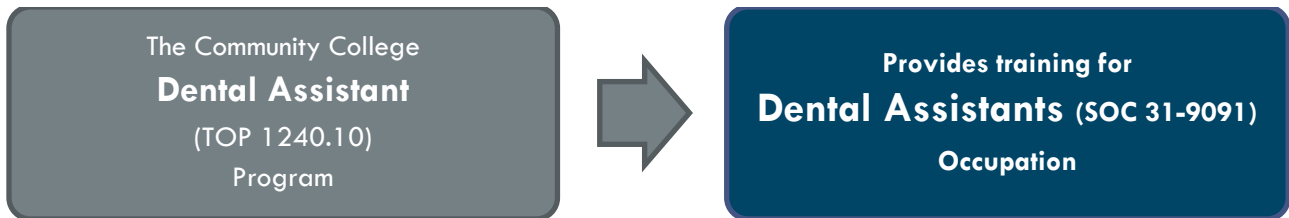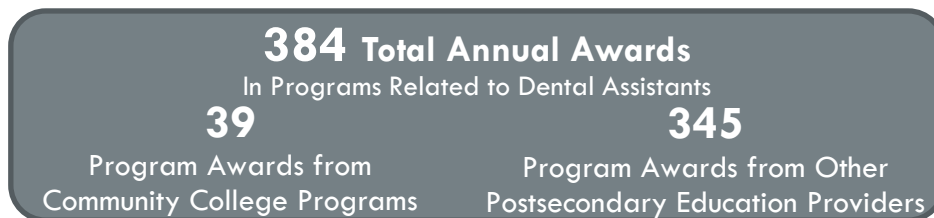# Dental Assistant

Inland Empire/Desert Region (Riverside and San Bernardino counties)

This workforce demand report uses state and federal job projection data developed before the economic impact of COVID-19. The COE is monitoring the situation and will provide more information as it becomes available. Please consult with local employers to understand their current employment needs.

Summary

The Community College **Dental Assistant** (TOP 1240.10) Program	→	Provides training for **Dental Assistants** (SOC 31-9091) Occupation

Over the next five years (2020-2025), dental assistant employment is projected to

Increase Employment **14%**	**808** Annual Job Openings	**$18.68**/hr median wage below the $24.36 hourly Self-sustainability Standard

384 Total Annual Awards
In Programs Related to Dental Assistants

39 Program Awards from Community College Programs	**345** Program Awards from Other Postsecondary Education Providers

The Inland Empire/Desert Centers of Excellence

🚧 **Cautiously Recommends**

Dental Assistant Program Expansion
due to the hourly earnings falling short of the self-sustainability standard

Introduction

This report provides labor market occupational demand and wage research and postsecondary programs outcomes related to dental assistant training. California Community College dental assistant (TOP 1240.10) programs prepare students for employment through instruction of the techniques used in the clinical chairside procedures of dentistry, including preparation of the patient, radiographic exposures, the mixing of dental materials, dental office management specific to the licensure examination (Taxonomy of Programs, 2012). The knowledge, skills, and abilities trained by dental assistant programs lead to the dental assistant occupation.

Dental Assistants (SOC 31-9091)

Perform limited clinical duties under the direction of a dentist. Clinical duties may include equipment preparation and sterilization, preparing patients for treatment, assisting the dentist during treatment, and providing patients with instructions for oral healthcare procedures. May perform administrative duties such as scheduling appointments, maintaining medical records, billing, and coding information for insurance purposes.

Sample job titles: Certified Dental Assistant (CDA), Certified Registered Dental Assistant, Dental Assistant (DA), Expanded Dental Assistant, Expanded Duty Dental Assistant (EDDA), Expanded Functions Dental Assistant (EFDA), Oral Surgery Assistant, Orthodontic Assistant (Ortho Assistant), Registered Dental Assistant (RDA), Surgical Dental Assistant

Entry-Level Educational Requirement: Postsecondary nondegree award
Work Experience Required: None
Training Requirement: None
Incumbent workers with a Community College Award or Some Postsecondary Coursework: 57%

Job Counts and Projections

In 2020, there were 5,284 dental assistant jobs in the Inland Empire/Desert Region. Employment for this occupation is expected to grow by 14% through 2025. Over this period, 808 annual job openings are projected for dental assistants. Exhibit 1 displays the job counts, five-year projected job growth, job openings, and the share of incumbent workers age 55 years and older in the region.

Exhibit 1: Five-year projections, 2020-2025

2020 Jobs	2025 Jobs	5-Yr % Change (New Jobs)	5-Yr Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	% of workers age 55+
5,284	6,016	14%	4,040	808	10%

Source: Emsi 2022.1

An online job advertisement search for dental assistant jobs was conducted to reveal the details about the employers seeking these workers, including the time it takes to fill positions, earnings information, and in-demand skills. The job advertisements search was limited to positions that specified a desire for registered dental assistants. Over the previous 12 months, 1,168 job advertisements for dental assistants were posted in the region.

Exhibit 2 shows the number of job ads posted during the last 12 months in the Inland Empire/Desert Region and the regional and statewide average time to fill this job. On average, employers in the local region fill online job advertisements for dental assistants in 26 days, five days shorter than the statewide average time to fill. Time to fill information indicates that employers in the region may face fewer challenges filling open

positions than other employers in California.

Exhibit 2: Job ads and time to fill

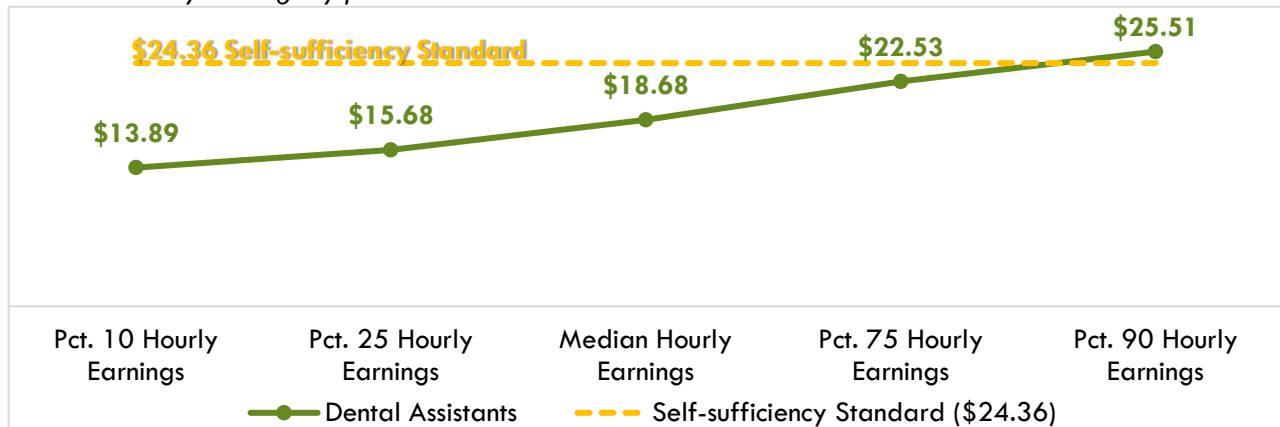| Job Ads	Regional Average Time to Fill (Days)	Statewide Average Time to Fill (Days)
1,168	26	31

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Earnings and Benefits

Community colleges should ensure their training programs lead to employment opportunities that provide self-sustainable income. The University of Washington estimates that a self-sufficient hourly rate for a single adult with one school-age child is $24.36 per hour or $51,452 annually in Riverside County; $23.73 per hour or $50,119 annually in San Bernardino County (Pearce, 2021). For this study, the higher hourly earnings requirement in Riverside County is adopted as the self-sufficiency standard for the two-county region.

Exhibit 3 displays the hourly earnings for dental assistants in the Inland Empire/Desert Region. Dental assistants' 50th percentile hourly earnings are below the regional self-sufficiency rate. The hourly earnings for this occupation do not surpass the self-sustainability rate until the 90th percentile, indicating that only the top 10% of workers earn a self-sustainable wage.

Exhibit 3: Hourly earnings by percentile

Source: Emsi 2022.1

Benefits information, provided by the occupational guides developed by the California Labor Market Information Division, reveals that dental assistant benefits vary significantly contingent upon full-time employment. Most dental practices may offer full-time dental assistants vacation and sick leave as well as medical, dental, vision, and life insurance. Generally, part-time assistants receive fewer benefits (Detailed Occupational Guides, 2022).

Advertised Salary from Online Job Ads

Exhibit 4 displays online job ad salary data for dental assistants over the last 12 months. Online job ad salary information reveals that employers are willing to pay dental assistants a median annual salary of $40,000, below the region's $51,452 annual ($24.36 hourly) self-sufficiency standard. Consider the salary information with caution since only 69% (808 out of 1,168) of online job advertisements for this occupation provided salary information. The salary figures are prorated to reflect full-time, annual earnings status.

Exhibit 4: Advertised salary information

	Real-Time Salary Information				
Number of job ads	Less than $35,000	$35,000 to $49,999	$50,000 to $74,999	More than $75,000	Median Annual Salary
808	20%	74%	5%	1%	$40,000

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Employers, Skills, Education, and Work Experience

Exhibit 5 displays the employers that posted 20 or more job ads for dental assistants in the region over the last 12 months. Showing employer names provides some insight into where students may find employment after completing a program. Pacific Dental Services, a dental support organization that partners with business-owner dentists, posted the most job advertisements for dental assistants in the region over the last 12 months.

Exhibit 5: Employers posting the most job ads for dental assistants

Top Employers	Job Ads
Pacific Dental Services	114
Western Dental Services	70
West Coast Dental	35
Smile Brands	30
Gentle Dental	23
Pure Dental of Murrieta & Orthodontics	22
Barsoum Dental	22
All other employers	*852*
Total	**1,168**

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Exhibit 6 lists a sample of specialized and employability skills employers' seek when looking for workers to fill dental assistant positions. Specialized skills are occupation-specific skills that employers request for industry or job competency. Employability skills are foundational skills that transcend industries and occupations; this category is often referred to as "soft skills." The skills requested in job ads may be utilized to guide curriculum

development. Approximately 10% (115 job ads) of employers sought candidates with an understanding Dentrix dental software.

Exhibit 6: Sample of in-demand skills from employer job ads

Specialized skills (n=1,055)	Employability skills
• X-Rays • Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) • Cleaning • Patient/Family Instruction • Radiology	• Communication Skills • Bilingual (Spanish/English) • Detail-Oriented • Organizational Skills • Computer Literacy

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Exhibit 7 displays the typical entry-level education, educational attainment, and minimum advertised education requirements for dental assistants. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 57% of incumbent workers in this field hold a community college-level of educational attainment; "some college, no degree" and an "associate degree." Nearly all job advertisements (99%) for dental assistants sought candidates with a high school diploma or vocational training.

Exhibit 7: Typical entry-level education, educational attainment, and minimum advertised education requirements

Typical Entry-Level Education Requirement	CC-Level Educational Attainment*	Real-Time Minimum Advertised Education Requirement			
		Number of Job Ads	High school or vocational training	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree or higher
Postsecondary nondegree award	57%	607	99%	1%	-

Source: Emsi 2022.1, Burning Glass – Labor Insights
*Percentage of incumbent workers with a Community College Award or Some Postsecondary Coursework

Exhibit 8 displays the work experience typically required and the real-time work experience requirements from employer job ads for dental assistants. Most employers sought candidates with zero to two years of work experience.

Exhibit 8: Work experience required and real-time work experience requirements

Work Experience Typically Required	Real-Time Work Experience			
	Number of job ads	0 – 2 years	3 – 5 years	6+ years
None	538	88%	12%	-

Source: Emsi 2022.1, Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Certifications

Exhibit 9 displays the most frequently requested certifications by employers in job advertisements. Job advertisements reveal that employers value the Registered Dental Assistant (RDA) license issued by the Dental Board of California within the Department of Consumer Affairs. To obtain this license, individuals must either complete a board-approved registered dental assisting program or complete at least 15 months of satisfactory work experience as a dental assistant in addition to a department of education approved secondary education program, regional occupation center program, or regional occupation program (Dental Board of California, 2022). Please visit the Dental Board of California website for more information regarding the RDA license requirements (Dental Board of California, 2022).

Exhibit 9: Certifications most frequently required by employers

Certification (n=1,168)	Jobs Ads
Registered Dental Assistant	1,168
First Aid CPR AED	209
Basic Life Support	101

Source: Burning Glass – Labor Insights

Student Completions and Programs Outcomes

Exhibit 10 displays student completions for dental assistant (TOP 1240.10) programs over the last three academic years (2018-2021). Over this period, regional community colleges have issued 39 awards annually in dental assistant programs. Program completion and student outcome methodologies are found in the appendix. The regional community college programs listed below are approved registered dental assistant education providers (Dental Board of California, 2022a).

Exhibit 10: 2018-21, Annual average community college awards for dental assistant programs in the region

TOP 1240.10 – Dental Assistant (Local Program Title)	Academic Year 2018-19	Academic Year 2019-20	Academic Year 2020-21	Total CC Annual Average Awards, Academic Years 2018-21
Chaffey (Dental Assisting)				**9**
Associate Degree	3	5	4	4
Certificate (30 to < 60 units)	0	14	2	5
Moreno Valley (Dental Assistant)				**30**
Associate Degree	8	5	13	9
Certificate (30 to < 60 units)	21	0	42	21
Total	**32**	**24**	**61**	**39**

Source: MIS Data Mart, COCI

California program outcome data may provide a useful insight into the likelihood of success for the proposed program. Community college student outcome information based on the selected TOP code and region is provided in Exhibit 11.

Exhibit 11: 1240.10 – Dental assistant strong workforce program outcomes

Strong Workforce Program Metrics: 1240.10 – Dental Assistant Academic Year 2018-19, unless noted otherwise	Inland Empire/Desert Region	California
Unduplicated count of enrolled students (2019-20)	65	1,146
Completed 9+ career education units in one year (2019-20)	95%	58%
Perkins Economically disadvantaged students (2019-20)	92%	86%
Students who attained a noncredit workforce milestone in a year (2019-20)	44%	90%
Students who earned a degree, certificate, or attained apprenticeship (2019-20)	20	333
Transferred to a four-year institution (transfers)	-	10
Job closely related to the field of study (2017-18)	86%	88%
Median annual earnings (all exiters)	$17,052	$28,390
Median change in earnings (all exiters)	-	82%
Attained a living wage (completers and skills-builders)	-	24%

Sources: LaunchBoard Community College Pipeline and Strong Workforce Program Metrics

Exhibit 12 displays the awards reported by other postsecondary education providers in dental assisting/assistant (CIP 51.0601) programs. Completion data is compiled from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for the most recent three years available. On average, eight other postsecondary education institutions in the region have issued 345 awards annually over the last three academic years in approved registered dental assistant education programs.

Exhibit 12: Other educational provider dental assisting/assistant programs, three-year annual average credentials in the Inland Empire/Desert Region

51.0601 – Dental Assisting/Assistant	Academic Year 2016-17	Academic Year 2017-18	Academic Year 2018-19	Other Educational Providers Annual Average Credentials, Academic Years 2016-19
American Career College-Ontario				**60**
Award < 1 academic year	63	61	57	60
Baldy View Regional Occupational Program				**1**
Award < 1 academic year	3	0	0	1

51.0601 – Dental Assisting/Assistant	Academic Year 2016-17	Academic Year 2017-18	Academic Year 2018-19	Other Educational Providers Annual Average Credentials, Academic Years 2016-19
Concorde Career College-San Bernardino				**111**
Award < 1 academic year	122	103	109	111
InterCoast Colleges-Riverside				**4**
Award < 1 academic year	7	4	0	4
Milan Institute-Palm Desert				**18**
Award < 1 academic year	19	14	21	18
Riverside County Office of Education-School of Career Education				**35**
Award 1 < 2 academic years	35	25	33	31
Award < 1 academic year	0	12	0	4
UEI College-Riverside				**74**
Award 1 < 2 academic years	75	71	75	74
United Education Institute-Ontario				**42**
Award 1 < 2 academic years	49	40	36	42
Total	373	330	331	**345**

Source: IPEDS

Recommendation

Community college dental assistant programs provide the knowledge, skills, and abilities that lead to the dental assistant occupation. Employment for dental assistants is expected to increase by 14% through 2025, with 808 job openings expected annually. The hourly earnings for this occupation do not exceed the regional self-sufficiency standard until the 90th percentile, indicating that only the top 10% of workers earn a self-sustainable wage.

Two regional community colleges currently offer dental assistant (TOP 1240.10) programs. Regional community colleges have issued 39 awards annually in dental assistant programs over the last three academic years. Other postsecondary education providers in the region have issued 345 awards annually in programs related to dental assistants

The Centers of Excellence cautiously recommends expanding this programs due to the dental assistants occupation's hourly earnings for the falling short of the regional self-sustainability standard. Colleges considering dental assistant program should work closely with applicable employers to document the skills and certifications needed for students to achieve self-sustainable earnings shortly after exiting.

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Appendix: Methodology

Exhibit 10 displays the average annual California Community College (CCC) awards conferred during the three academic years between 2018 and 2021 from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS) Data Mart. Awards are the combined total of associate degrees and certificates issued during the timeframe, divided by three in this case to calculate an annual average. This is done to minimize the effect of atypical variation that might be present in a single year.

Community college student outcome information is from LaunchBoard and based on the selected TOP code and region. These metrics are based on records submitted to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems (MIS) by community colleges, which come from self-reported student information from CCC Apply and the National Student Clearinghouse. Employment and earnings metrics are sourced from records provided by California's Employment Development Department's Unemployment Insurance database. When available, outcomes for completers are reported to demonstrate the impact that earning a degree or certificate can have on employment and earnings. For more information on the types of students included for each metric, please see the web link for LaunchBoard's Strong Workforce Program Metrics Data Element Dictionary in the References section (LaunchBoard, 2021a). Finally, employment in a job closely related to the field of study comes from self-reported student responses on the CTE Employment Outcomes Survey (CTEOS), administered by Santa Rosa Junior College (LaunchBoard, 2021a).

Job advertisement data is limited to the information provided by employers and the ability of artificial intelligence search engines to identify this information. Additionally, preliminary calculations by Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce found that "just 30 to 40 percent of openings for candidates with some college or an associate degree, and only 40 to 60 percent of openings for high school diploma holders appear online" (Carnevale et al., 2014). Online job advertisements often do not reveal employers' hiring intentions; it is unknown if employers plan to hire one or multiple workers from a single online job ad or if they are collecting resumes for future hiring needs. A closed job ad may not be the result of a hired worker.

Table 1. 2020 to 2025 job growth, wages, entry-level education, training, and work experience required for dental assistants in the Inland Empire/Desert Region (Riverside and San Bernardino counties combined)

Occupation (SOC)	2020 Jobs	5-Year Change (New Jobs)	5-Year % Change (New Jobs)	Annual Openings (New + Replacement Jobs)	Entry-Experienced Hourly Wage (10th to 90th percentile)	Median Hourly Wage (50th percentile)	Average Annual Earnings	Entry-Level Education & On-The-Job-Training	Work Experience Required
Dental Assistants (31-9091)	5,284	732	14%	808	$13.89 to $25.51	$18.68	$40,200	Postsecondary nondegree award & None	None

Source: Emsi 2022.1