



**Labor Market Analysis: 1240.10 – Dental Assistant
51.0601 – Dental Assisting/Assistant
Entry Level Dental Assistant Essential Skills Certificate –
Noncredit Program Development**
Los Angeles Center of Excellence, May 2026

Program Endorsement:	Endorsed: All Criteria Met <input type="checkbox"/>	Endorsed: Some Criteria Met <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not Endorsed <input type="checkbox"/>
Program Endorsement Criteria			
Supply Gap:	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>
Living Wage: (Entry-Level, 25th)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Education:	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		No <input type="checkbox"/>
Emerging Occupation(s)			
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>		No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

This report analyzes whether local labor market demand is being met by community college programs aligned with the identified middle-skill occupation¹ or whether a shortage of workers exists. Labor market demand is measured by annual job openings while education supply is measured by the number of awards (degrees and certificates) conferred on average each year.

Based on the available data, there appears to be a supply gap for the one identified middle-skill occupation in the region. While entry-level wages are lower than the self-sufficiency standard wage in both Los Angeles and Orange counties, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) lists a postsecondary non-degree award as the typical entry-level education.

Recommendation: Due to two of three program endorsement criteria being met, the Los Angeles Center of Excellence for Labor Market Research (LA COE) endorses this proposed program.

Key Findings

Supply Gap

- 2,890 annual job openings are projected in the region through 2029. This number is greater than the three-year average of 1,266 awards conferred by educational institutions in the region.

¹ Middle-skill occupations typically require some postsecondary education, but less than a bachelor’s degree. The COE classifies middle-skill jobs as the following:

- All occupations that require an educational requirement of some college, associate degree or apprenticeship;
- All occupations that require a bachelor’s degree, but also have more than one-third of their existing labor force with an educational attainment of some college or associate degree; or
- All occupations that require a high school diploma or equivalent or no formal education, but also require short- to long-term on-the-job training where multiple community colleges have existing programs.

Living Wage

- \$21.33 is the typical entry-level hourly wages for *dental assistants*, which is lower than Los Angeles County’s self-sufficiency standard hourly (\$24.03/hour).²

Educational Attainment

- A postsecondary non-degree award is the typical entry-level education for *dental assistants*, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).
- 57% of workers in the field have completed some college or an associate degree, according to national educational attainment data.

Community college supply

- 6 community colleges issued awards related to dental assisting in the greater LA/OC region.
- 366 awards (degrees and certificates) were conferred on average each year between 2023 and 2025.

Other postsecondary supply

- 22 educational institutions in the LA/OC region have conferred awards in programs related to dental assisting over the past three years.
- 900 awards were conferred on average each year by other postsecondary institutions throughout the greater LA/OC region between 2022 and 2024.

TARGET OCCUPATION

LA COE prepared this report to provide regional labor market and postsecondary supply data related to one middle-skill occupation:

- **Dental Assistants (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.³

OCCUPATIONAL DEMAND

Exhibit 1 shows the five-year occupational demand projections for *dental assistants*. In the greater Los Angeles/Orange County region, the number of jobs related to this occupation is projected to increase by 6% through 2029. There will be nearly 2,900 job openings per year through 2029 due to job growth and replacements. The majority of jobs in 2024 for *dental assistants* (68%) were located in Los Angeles County.

² Center for Women’s Welfare, University of Washington. (2024). *The self-sufficiency standard for California 2024*. <http://selfsufficiencystandard.org/California>.

³ [Dental Assistants \(bls.gov\)](https://www.bls.gov/occupations/dental-assistants)

Exhibit 1: Current employment and occupational demand, Los Angeles and Orange counties⁴

Geography	2024 Jobs	2029 Jobs	2024-2029 Change	2024-2029 % Change	Annual Openings
Los Angeles	13,730	14,618	888	6%	1,983
Orange	6,316	6,720	405	6%	908
Total	20,046	21,339	1,293	6%	2,890

Detailed Occupation Data

Exhibit 2 displays the current employment and projected occupational demand for the target occupation in Los Angeles County. The average percentage of workers aged 55+ across all occupations in the Los Angeles/Orange County region is 26%; occupations with a larger share of workers aged 55 and older typically have greater replacement needs to offset the amount of impending retirements. On average, 81% of workers across all occupations in California are employed full-time. Occupations with a lower-than-average percentage of full-time workers may have less employment security but may see increased activity in the gig economy.

Exhibit 2: Detailed employment and occupational demand, Los Angeles County⁵

Occupation	2024 Jobs	2029 Jobs	5-Yr % Change	Annual Openings	% Aged 55 and older	% Full Time Workers
Dental Assistants	13,730	14,618	6%	1,983	14%	65%

WAGES

The labor market endorsement in this report considers the entry-level hourly wages for *dental assistants* in Los Angeles County as they relate to the county's self-sufficiency standard wage. Orange County wages are included below in order to provide a complete analysis of the greater Los Angeles/Orange County region.

Los Angeles County

The typical entry-level hourly wages for *dental assistants* are \$21.33, which is below the self-sufficiency standard wage for one adult (\$24.03 in Los Angeles County). Experienced workers can expect to earn wages of \$23.26, which is still lower than the self-sufficiency standard (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3: Earnings for occupation in Los Angeles County

Occupation	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25 th Percentile)	Median Hourly Earnings	Experienced Hourly Earnings (75 th Percentile)	Median Annual Earnings*
Dental Assistants	\$21.33	\$21.80	\$23.26	\$45,300

*Rounded to the nearest \$100

⁴ Five-year change represents new job additions to the workforce. Annual openings include new jobs and replacement jobs that result from retirements and separations.

⁵ Five-year change represents new job additions to the workforce. Annual openings include new jobs and replacement jobs that result from retirements and separations.

Orange County

The typical entry-level hourly wages for *dental assistants* are \$22.83, which is below the self-sufficiency standard wage for one adult (\$27.13 in Orange County). Experienced workers can expect to earn wages of \$24.89, which is still lower than the self-sufficiency standard (Exhibit 4).

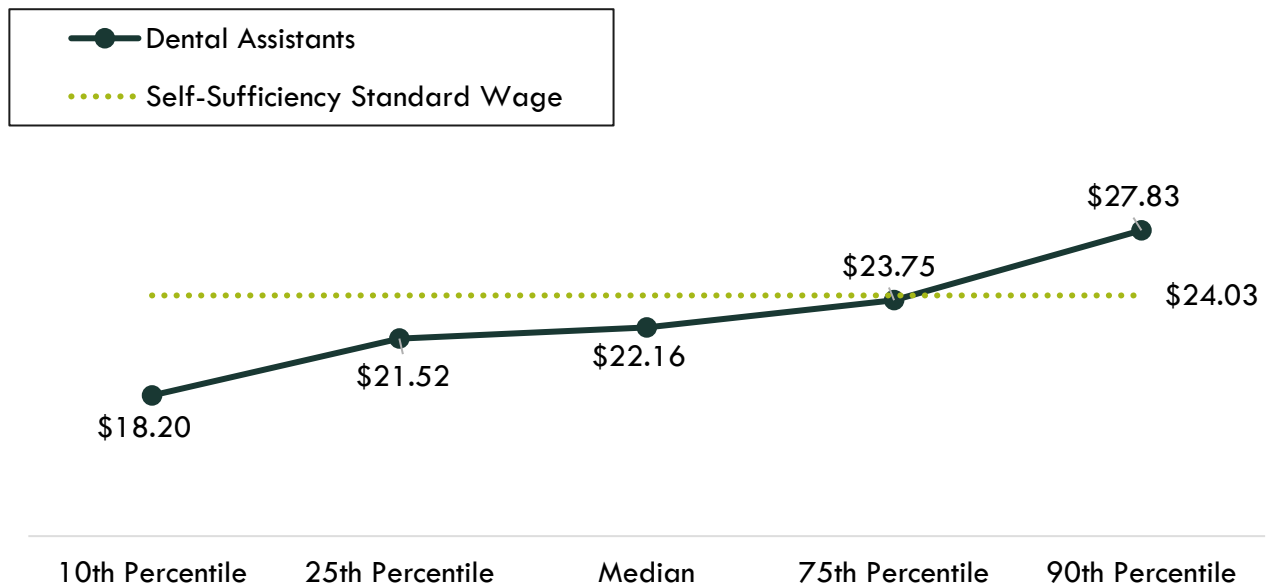
Exhibit 4: Earnings for occupation in Orange County

Occupation	Entry-Level Hourly Earnings (25 th Percentile)	Median Hourly Earnings	Experienced Hourly Earnings (75 th Percentile)	Median Annual Earnings*
Dental Assistants	\$22.83	\$23.33	\$24.89	\$48,500

*Rounded to the nearest \$100

Across the greater Los Angeles and Orange County region, the average entry-level hourly earnings for the occupation in this report are \$21.52; this is below the living wage for one single adult in Los Angeles County (\$24.03). Exhibit 5 shows the average hourly wage for the occupation in this report, for entry-level to experienced workers.

Exhibit 5: Average hourly earnings for dental assistants, Los Angeles and Orange counties



JOB POSTINGS

There were 6,280 online job postings related to *dental assistants* listed in the past 12 months in Los Angeles and Orange counties. Job postings were analyzed for the most common job titles, skills, and employers associated with the target occupation in this report (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6: Most commonly requested job titles, skills and employers in job postings, Los Angeles and Orange counties

Top Job Titles	Top Skills	Top Employers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dental assistants • Registered dental assistants • Orthodontic assistants • Dental assistants/registered dental assistants • Dental assistants/receptionists • Orthodontic dental assistants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterilization • Infection control • Dentistry • Dental assisting • Dental procedures • Patient education and counseling • Oral hygiene 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDS Health • West Coast Dental Services • Children’s Dental FunZone • AltaMed Health Services • Sonrava Health • Smile Brands • Cross Country Healthcare

In the greater Los Angeles/Orange County region, 20% of the *dental assistant* job postings listed a minimum educational requirement. Exhibit 7 details the number and percentage of job postings by educational level.

Exhibit 7: Education levels requested in job postings for dental assistants, Los Angeles and Orange counties

Education Level	Job Postings	% of Job Postings
Bachelor's degree	9	1%
Associate degree	130	10%
High school diploma or vocational training	1,116	89%

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) lists a postsecondary non-degree award the typical entry-level education for *dental assistants* (Exhibit 8). Furthermore, the national-level data indicates 57% of workers in the field have completed some college or an associate degree as their highest level of educational attainment. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) lists the following typical entry-level education levels for the occupation in this report:

Exhibit 8: Entry-level education preferred by employers nationally, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Occupation	Education Level
Dental assistants	Postsecondary non-degree award

EDUCATIONAL SUPPLY

Community College Supply

Exhibit 9 shows the annual and three-year average number of awards conferred by community colleges in the related TOP codes: Dental Occupations (1240.00) and Dental Assistant (1240.10). The colleges with the most completions in the region are West LA, Cerritos, and Citrus.

Exhibit 9: Regional community college awards (certificates and degrees), 2023-2025

TOP Code	Program	College	2022-23 Awards	2023-24 Awards	2024-25 Awards	3-Year Average
1240.00	Dental Occupations	West LA	165	69	69	101
		LA Subtotal	165	69	69	101
		Supply Subtotal/Average	165	69	69	101
1240.10	Dental Assistant	Cerritos	30	35	46	37
		Citrus	35	12	42	30
		Pasadena	19	22	26	22
		West LA	149	126	127	134
		LA Subtotal	233	195	241	223
		Cypress	18	20	18	19
		Orange Coast	29	21	19	23
		OC Subtotal	47	41	37	42
		Supply Subtotal/Average	280	236	278	265
Supply Total/Average			445	305	347	366

Exhibit 10 displays the community college awards broken down by award type. In this case, the majority of awards issued by community colleges are certificates (57%).

Exhibit 10: Community college awards by award type, 2023-2025

Award Type	# of Awards	% of Awards
A.A./A.S. degrees	55	15%
Certificates	210	57%
Noncredit awards	101	28%
Total	366	100%

Other Postsecondary Supply

For a comprehensive regional supply analysis, it is important to consider the supply from other institutions in the region that provide training programs for *dental assistants*. Exhibit 11 shows the number of awards conferred by these institutions in relevant programs. Due to different data collection periods, the most recent data is from 2022 to 2024. Between 2022 and 2024, other postsecondary college institutions in the region conferred an average of 900 sub-baccalaureate

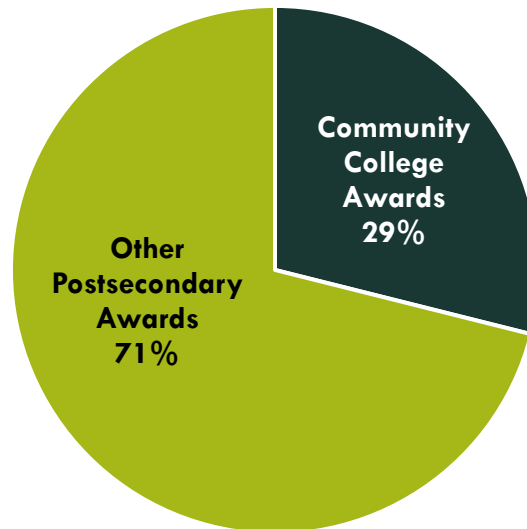
awards. Sub-baccalaureate awards include associate degrees, postsecondary awards, and other academic awards that typically take fewer than four years to complete.

Exhibit 11: Other regional postsecondary awards, 2022-2024

CIP Code	Program	Postsecondary Institution	2021-22 Awards	2022-23 Awards	2023-24 Awards	3-Year Average
51.0601	Dental Assisting/ Assistant	ABC Adult School	7	8	5	7
		American Career College-Anaheim	49	54	63	55
		American Career College-Los Angeles	93	105	107	102
		California Career Institute	-	2	-	1
		CBD College	8	-	-	3
		Concorde Career College-Garden Grove	79	93	65	79
		Concorde Career College-N. Hollywood	46	45	27	39
		Downey Adult School	25	20	29	25
		Hacienda La Puente Adult Education	11	12	10	11
		Healthcare Career College	8	6	4	6
		National Career College	18	24	15	19
		North-West College-Anaheim	17	19	12	16
		North-West College-Glendale	16	8	8	11
		North-West College-Pomona	14	20	13	16
		North-West College-Van Nuys	20	7	7	11
		North-West College-West Covina	26	37	23	29
		PCI College	3	1	-	1
		UEI College-Garden Grove	103	101	84	96
		UEI College-Gardena	86	97	82	88
		UEI College-Huntington Park	148	121	119	129
UEI College-Reseda	68	86	83	79		
UEI College-West Covina	86	75	72	78		
Supply Total/Average			931	941	828	900

Exhibit 12 shows the proportion of community college awards conferred in the greater Los Angeles/Orange County region compared to the number of other postsecondary awards for the programs in this report. The majority of awards conferred in these programs are awarded by other institutions in the greater Los Angeles/Orange County region.

Exhibit 12: Percentage of community college awards compared to other postsecondary institution awards in the Los Angeles/Orange County region



Contact information:

Luke Meyer, Director

Los Angeles Center of Excellence

lmeyer7@mtsac.edu

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DATA SOURCES

- O*NET Online
- Lightcast (formerly Emsi)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
- California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division, OES
- California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Management Information Systems (MIS)
- Self-Sufficiency Standard at the Center for Women’s Welfare, University of Washington
- Chancellor’s Office Curriculum Inventory (COCI 2.0)



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