

May 2021

Labor Market Analysis

Dental Assistants

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Prepared by the Central Valley/Mother Lode Center of Excellence

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COVID-19 Statement: This report includes employment projection data by Emsi. Emsi’s projections are modeled on recorded (historical) employment figures and incorporate several underlying assumptions, including the assumption that the economy during the projection period will be at approximately full employment or potential output. To the extent that a recession or labor shock, such as the economic effects of COVID-19, can cause long-term structural change, they may impact the projections. At this time, it is not possible to quantify the impact of COVID-19 on projections of industry and occupational employment. Other measures such as unemployment rates and monthly industry employment estimates will reflect the most recent information on employment and jobs in the state and, in combination with input from local employers, may help validate current and future employment needs as depicted here.

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Summary

Please note the COVID-19 statement on page 2 when considering this report's findings.

This study conducted by the Central Valley/Mother Lode Center of Excellence examines labor market demand, wages, skills, and postsecondary supply for dental assistants. One occupation related to dental assistants was identified for Reedley College:

- 31-9091, Dental Assistants

Key findings:

- **Occupational demand** — More than 3,200 workers were employed in jobs related to dental assistants in 2019 in the South Central Valley/Southern Mother Lode (SCV/SML) subregion. The largest occupation is dental assistants with 3,238 workers in 2019, a projected decline in employment of 5% over the next five years, and 331 annual openings.
- **Wages** — Dental assistants earn an entry-level wage of \$15.33/hour in the subregion and \$15.55/hour in the region.
- **Employers** — Employers with the most job postings in the subregion are Western Dental Services, United Health Centers of the San Joaquin Valley, and Western Dental Orthodontics.
- **Occupational titles** — The most common occupational title in job postings in the subregion is dental assistants. The most common job title is dental assistant.
- **Skills and certifications** — The top baseline skill is Spanish, the top specialized skill is X-rays, and the top software skill is Dentrix. The most in-demand certification is Certified Dental Assistant.
- **Education** — A postsecondary nondegree award is typically required for dental assistants.
- **Supply** — Analysis of postsecondary completions in the region shows that on average 359 awards were conferred in the Central Valley/Mother Lode region each year.

Based on a comparison of occupational demand and supply, there is an undersupply of seven (7) trained workers in the subregion and 199 workers in the region. The Center of Excellence recommends caution in expanding a program related to dental assistants due to low subregional demand and a projected decline in employment. Reedley College should work with the Healthcare Regional Director, the college's advisory board, and local industry to explore whether a program expansion is warranted.

Introduction

The Central Valley/Mother Lode Center of Excellence was asked by Reedley College to provide labor market information for dental assistants. The geographical focus for this report is the South Central Valley/Southern Mother Lode (SCV/SML) subregion, but regional demand and supply data has been included for broader applicability and use.

The average living wage for a single adult in the SCV/SML subregion is \$10.30/hour.¹ Analysis of the program and occupational data related to dental assistants resulted in the identification of applicable occupations. The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System codes and titles used in this report are:

- 31-9091, Dental Assistants

The occupational titles, job descriptions, sample job titles, and knowledge and skills from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and O*NET OnLine are shown below.

Dental Assistants

Job Description: 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.

Knowledge: Medicine and Dentistry, English Language, Customer and Personal Service, Education and Training, Psychology

Skills: Active Listening, Reading Comprehension, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Service Orientation

Occupational Demand

The South Central Valley/Southern Mother Lode subregion employed 3,238 workers in dental assistants occupations in 2019 (Exhibit 1). The largest and only occupation in the analysis is dental assistants with 3,238 workers in 2019. This occupation is projected to decline by 5% over the next five years but will have 331 projected annual openings.

Exhibit 1. Dental assistants employment and occupational projections in the SCV/SML subregion

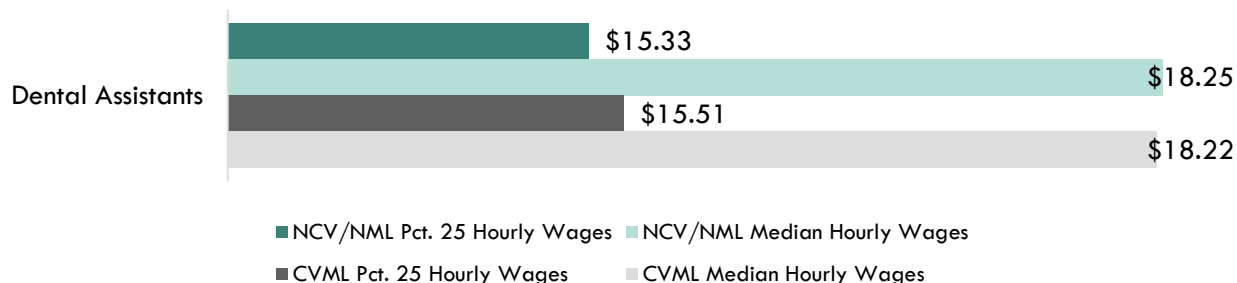
Occupation	2019 Jobs	2024 Jobs	5-Year Change	5-Year % Change	Annual Openings
Dental Assistants	3,238	3,081	(158)	(5%)	331

¹ The term "living wage" in Center of Excellence reports is calculated by averaging the self-sufficiency wages from the Insight Center's California Family Needs Calculator for each county in the subregion: <https://insightccd.org/tools-metrics/self-sufficiency-standard-tool-for-california/>.

Wages

Exhibit 2 compares the entry-level and experienced wages of the dental assistant occupation. Dental assistants earn an entry-level wage of \$15.33/hour in the subregion and \$15.55/hour in the region.

Exhibit 2. Entry-level and experienced wage comparison in the SCV/SML subregion and region



Salary data from Emsi shows that dental assistants earn a median salary of \$37,951.67 in the subregion.

Exhibit 3. Median salaries for dental assistants occupations in the subregion

Occupation	Median Salary
Dental Assistants	\$37,951.67

Job Postings

There were 409 job postings for the one occupation in the SCV/SML subregion from November 2020 to April 2021.² The employers with the most job postings are listed in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4. Top dental assistants employers by number of job postings

Employer	Job Postings	% Job Postings
Western Dental Services	23	6%
United Health Centers Of The San Joaquin Valley	16	4%
Western Dental Orthodontics	15	4%
Pacific Dental Services Incorporated	14	4%
Family Healthcare Network	13	4%
Stynt	9	2%
Western Dental And Amp Orthodontics	9	2%
Smileworld Dental	6	2%
Western Dental	6	2%
Aspen Dental	5	1%

² Other than occupation titles and job titles, the categories below can be counted one or multiple times per job posting, and across several areas in a single posting. For example, a skill can be counted in two different skill types, and an employer can indicate more than one education level.

Exhibit 4 shows how job postings for the targeted occupation in the SCV/SML subregion are distributed across one O*NET OnLine occupation. The occupational title dental assistants is listed in 409 job postings. Note how this occupational title dominates the job posting results. Common job titles in postings include dental assistant in 108 job postings, registered dental assistant in 66 job postings, and registered dental assistant RDA in 29 job postings.

Exhibit 5. Top occupational titles in job postings for dental assistants

Occupational Title	Job Postings	% of Job Postings
Dental Assistants	409	100%

Education

Of the 409 job postings, 205 listed an education level preferred for the positions being filled. Of those, 100% requested high school or vocational training, and 8% requested an associate degree (Exhibit 6). A job posting can indicate more than one education level. Hence, the percentages shown in the chart below may total more than 100%.

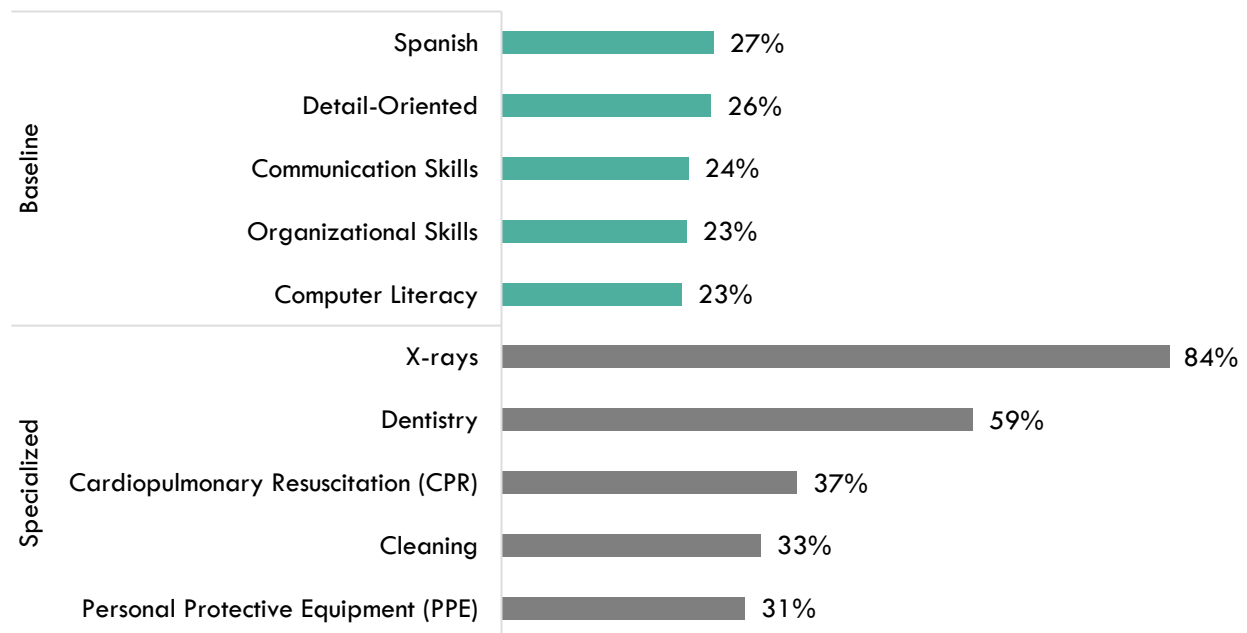
Exhibit 6. Education levels requested in job postings for dental assistants

Education Level	Job Postings	% of Job Postings
High school or vocational training	205	100%
Associate degree	16	8%

Baseline and Specialized Skills

Exhibit 7 depicts the top baseline and specialized skills for the targeted occupations. The three most important baseline skills are Spanish, 27% of job postings, detail-oriented, 26%, and communication, 24%. The top three specialized skills are X-rays, 84% of job postings, dentistry, 59%, and CPR, 37%.

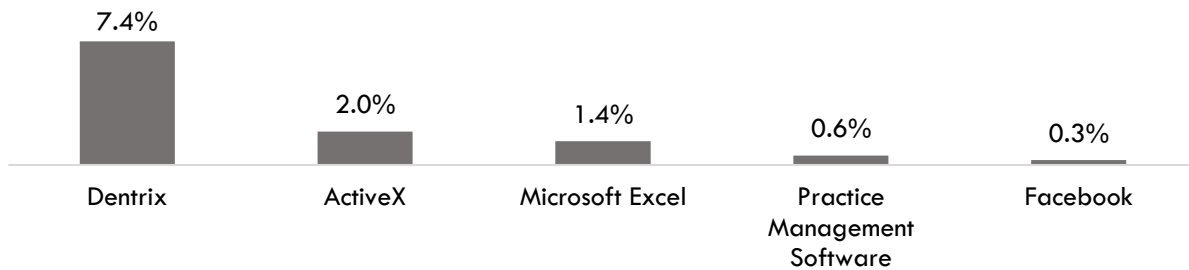
Exhibit 7. In-demand dental assistants baseline and specialized skills



Software Skills

Analysis also included the software skills most in demand by employers. Dentrax and ActiveX were the top two software skills identified in job postings (Exhibit 8).

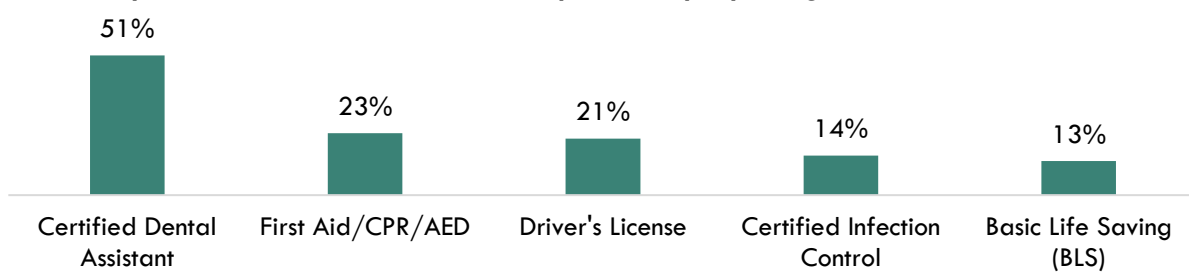
Exhibit 8. In-demand dental assistants software skills



Certifications

Of the 409 job postings, 208 contained certification data. Among those, 51% indicated a need for a Certified Dental Assistant. The next top certifications are First Aid/CPR/AED and a driver's license (Exhibit 9). (Due to the low number of job postings with certifications listed, the chart below may not be representative of the full sample.)

Exhibit 9. Top dental assistants certifications requested in job postings



Education, Work Experience & Training

A postsecondary nondegree award is typically required for dental assistants (Exhibit 10).

Exhibit 10. Education, work experience, training, and Current Population Survey results for dental assistants occupations³

Occupation	Typical Entry-level Education	Work Experience Required	Typical On-The-Job Training	CPS
Dental Assistants	Postsecondary nondegree award	None	None	59.5%

³ "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey," Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/>.

Supply

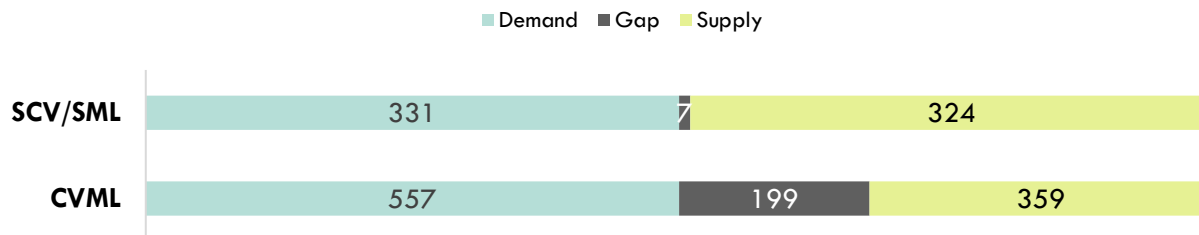
Analysis of program data from the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Data Mart included the TOP and CIP codes and titles: 124010 - Dental Assistant and 51.0601 - Dental Assisting/Assistant. Analysis of the last three years of data shows that, on average, 359 awards were conferred in the Central Valley/Mother Lode region each year (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11. Postsecondary supply for dental assistants occupations in the region

TOP and CIP Code - Title	Colleges	Associate Degree	Award 1 < 2 Academic Years	Certificate 30 < 60 Semester Units	Subtotal
124010 - Dental Assistant	Reedley College	7		24	31
	San Joaquin Valley College-Visalia	2	138		139
51.0601 - Dental Assisting/Assistant	UEI College-Bakersfield		95		95
	UEI College-Fresno		58		58
	United Education Institute-UEI College Stockton		35		35
TOTAL		8	326	24	359

There is an undersupply of seven (7) dental assistant workers in the SCV/SML subregion and 199 workers in the region (Exhibit 12).

Exhibit 12. Dental assistants workforce annual demand and supply in the SCV/SML subregion and region



Student Outcomes

Exhibit 13 summarizes employment and wage outcomes from the California Community College Chancellor’s Cal-PASS Plus LaunchBoard for the TOP code related to dental assistants. There were 24 students who received a degree or certificate or attained apprenticeship journey status; and 75% of students obtained a job closely related to their field of study.

Exhibit 13. Regional metrics for the TOP code related to dental assistants

Metric	Dental Assistant-124010
Students Who Got a Degree or Certificate or Attained Apprenticeship Journey Status	24
Number of Students Who Transferred	*
Job Closely Related to Field of Study	75%
Median Change in Earnings	*
Attained a Living Wage	*
* denotes data not available.	

Conclusion

The entry-level wages of the one occupation exceed the SCV/SML subregion’s average living wage. There were 409 job postings in the past six months for occupations related to dental assistants in the subregion. Analysis of skills and certification requirements in job postings indicates:

- The top baseline skill is Spanish, and the top specialized skill is X-rays.
- The top software skill is Dentrrix.
- The top certification is a Certified Dental Assistant.

Recommendation

Based on a comparison of occupational demand and supply, there is an undersupply of seven (7) trained workers in the subregion and 199 workers in the region. The Center of Excellence recommends caution in expanding a program related to dental assistants due to low subregional demand and a projected decline in employment. Reedley College should work with the Healthcare Regional Director, the college’s advisory board, and local industry to explore whether a program expansion is warranted.

Appendix A: Methodology & Data Sources

Data Sources

Labor market and educational supply data compiled in this report derive from a variety of sources. Data were drawn from external sources, including the Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc., the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Management Information Systems Data Mart and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Below is the summary of the data sources found in this study.

Data Type	Source
Labor Market Information/Population Estimates and Projections/Educational Attainment	Economic Modeling Specialists, Intl. (EMSI). EMSI occupational employment data are based on final EMSI industry data and final EMSI staffing patterns. Wage estimates are based on Occupational Employment Statistics (QCEW and Non-QCEW Employees classes of worker) and the American Community Survey (Self-Employed and Extended Proprietors). Occupational wage estimates also affected by county-level EMSI earnings by industry: economicmodeling.com .
Typical Education Level and On-the-job Training	Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) uses a system to assign categories for entry-level education and typical on-the-job training to each occupation for which BLS publishes projections data: https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/educational-attainment.htm .
Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment Estimates	California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division: labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov .
Job Posting and Skills Data	Burning Glass: burning-glass.com/ .
Additional Education Requirements/ Employer Preferences	The O*NET Job Zone database includes over 900 occupations as well as information on skills, abilities, knowledge, work activities and interests associated with specific occupations: onetonline.org .

Key Terms and Concepts

Annual Job Openings: Annual openings are calculated by dividing the number of years in the projection period by total job openings.

Education Attainment Level: The highest education attainment level of workers age 25 years or older.

Employment Estimate: The total number of workers currently employed.

Employment Projections: Projections of employment are calculated by a proprietary Economic Modeling Specialists, Intl. (EMSI) formula that includes historical employment and economic indicators along with national, state and local trends.

Living Wage: The cost of living in a specific community or region for one adult and no children. The cost increases with the addition of children.

Occupation: An occupation is a grouping of job titles that have a similar set of activities or tasks that employees perform.

Percent Change: Rate of growth or decline in the occupation for the projected period; this does not factor in replacement openings.

Replacements: Estimate of job openings resulting from workers retiring or otherwise permanently leaving an occupation. Workers entering an occupation often need training. These replacement needs, added to job openings due to growth, may be used to assess the minimum number of workers who will need to be trained for an occupation.

Total Job Openings (New + Replacements): Sum of projected growth (new jobs) and replacement needs. When an occupation is expected to lose jobs, or retain the current employment level, number of openings will equal replacements.

Typical Education Requirement: represents the typical education level most workers need to enter an occupation.

Typical On-The-Job Training: indicates the typical on-the-job training needed to attain competency in the skills needed in the occupation.