

# Dental Assistants

## Labor Market Analysis: San Diego County

April 2020

### Summary



This brief provides labor market information about *Dental Assistants* to assist the San Diego and Imperial Counties Community Colleges with decision-making in processes such as program development. According to available labor market information, *Dental Assistants* has a labor market demand of 667 annual job openings, while average demand for an occupation in San Diego County is 277 annual job openings. Eight educational institutions in San Diego County supply 423 awards for this occupation, suggesting that there is a supply gap. This occupation's median wages are above the living wage. According to the California Community Colleges' outcomes data, 51 percent of students who completed a program related to *Dental Assistants* earned a living wage, compared to 58 percent of students who complete Career Education programs in general. The typical entry-level education for *Dental Assistants* is a postsecondary non-degree award. This brief recommends to proceed with a new program for this occupation because 1) its median earnings are above the living wage; 2) a postsecondary non-degree award is needed for the occupation; and 3) a high number of annual openings exist.

## Introduction

This report provides labor market information in San Diego County for the following occupational code in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)<sup>1</sup> system:

**Dental Assistants (SOC 31-9091):** Assist dentist, set up equipment, prepare patient for treatment, and keep records. Sample reported job titles include:

- Orthodontic Assistant
- Surgical Dental Assistant
- Registered Dental Assistant
- Certified Dental Assistant
- Orthodontic Technician
- Oral Surgery Assistant
- Expanded Function Dental Assistant
- Expanded Duty Dental Assistant
- Certified Registered Dental Assistant

While this brief primarily focuses on *Dental Assistants*, it also provides additional information from online job postings for occupations within the “Offices of Dentists” industry. The “Offices of Dentists” industry comprises establishments of health practitioners (Doctor of Dental Medicine, Doctor of Dental Surgery and Doctor of Dental Science) that are primarily engaged in independent practice of general or specialized dentistry or dental surgery. These occupations include:

- **Administrative Services Managers (SOC 11-3011):** Plan, direct, or coordinate one or more administrative services of an organization, such as records and information management, mail distribution, facilities planning and maintenance, custodial operations, and other office support services.
- **Receptionists and Information Clerks (SOC 43-4171):** Answer inquiries and provide information to the general public, customers, visitors, and other interested parties regarding activities conducted at establishment and location of departments, offices, and employees within the organization.

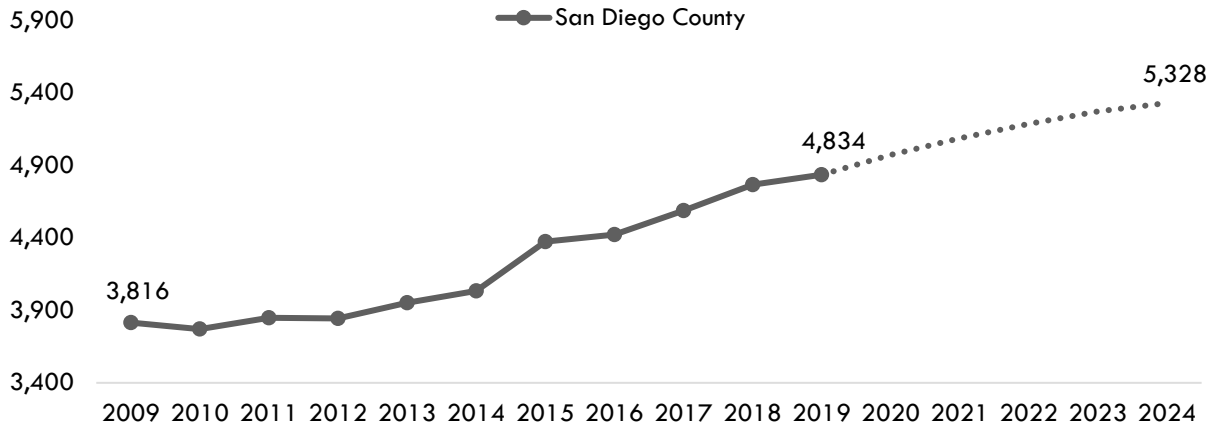
## Projected Occupational Demand

Between 2019 and 2024, *Dental Assistants* are projected to increase by 494 net jobs or 10 percent (Exhibit 1). Employers in San Diego County will need to hire 667 workers annually to fill new jobs and backfill jobs due to attrition caused by turnover and retirement, for example.

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<sup>1</sup> The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is used by federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating or disseminating data. [bls.gov/soc](https://www.bls.gov/soc).

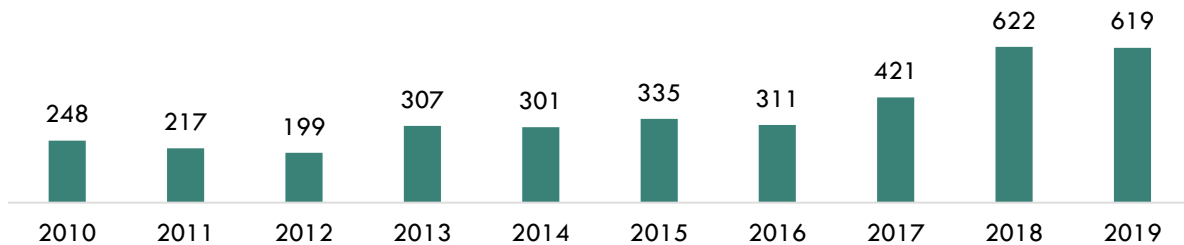
**Exhibit 1: Number of Jobs for Dental Assistants (2009-2024)<sup>2</sup>**



## Online Job Postings

This report analyzes not only historical and projected (traditional LMI) data, but also recent data from online job postings (real-time LMI). Online job postings may provide additional insight about recent changes in the labor market demand that are not captured by historical data. Between 2010 and 2019, there was an average of **358** online job postings per year for *Dental Assistants* in San Diego County (Exhibit 2a).

**Exhibit 2a: Number of Online Job Postings for Dental Assistants in San Diego County (2010-2019)<sup>3</sup>**

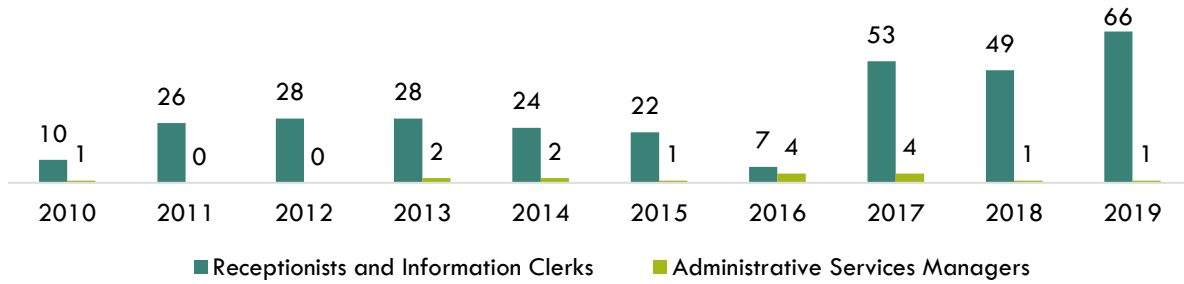


Between 2010 and 2019, there was an average of **31** online job postings for *Receptionists and Information Clerks* and an average of **two** online job postings for *Administrative Services Managers* within the “Offices of Dentists” industry (Exhibit 2b).

<sup>2</sup> Emsi 2020.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

<sup>3</sup> Burning Glass Technologies, “Labor Insight Real-Time Labor Market Information Tool.” 2010-2019.

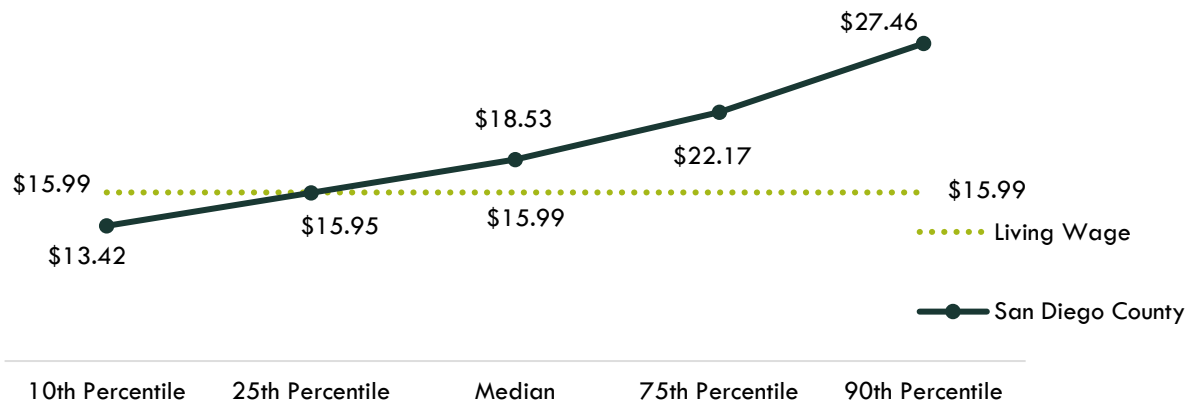
**Exhibit 2b: Number of Online Job Postings for Receptionists and Information Clerks and Administrative Services Managers for Offices of Dentists in San Diego County (2010-2019)**



## Earnings

Dental Assistants receive median hourly earnings of **\$18.53**; this is more than the living wage for a single adult in San Diego County, which is **\$15.99** per hour (Exhibit 3).<sup>4</sup>

**Exhibit 3: Hourly Earnings<sup>5</sup> for Dental Assistants in San Diego County<sup>6</sup>**



<sup>4</sup> "California Family Needs Calculator (formerly the Self-Sufficiency Standard)," Insight: Center for Community Economic Development, last updated 2018. [insightccd.org/2018-self-sufficiency-standard](https://insightccd.org/2018-self-sufficiency-standard).

<sup>5</sup> 10th and 25th percentiles could be considered entry-level wages, and 75th and 90th percentiles could be considered experienced wages for individuals who may have been in the occupation longer, received more training than others, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Emsi 2020.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

## Educational Supply

The educational supply for an occupation can be estimated by analyzing the number of awards in related Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) or Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes.<sup>7</sup> There are **two** TOP codes and **three** CIP codes related to *Dental Assistants* (Exhibit 4).

**Exhibit 4: Related TOP and CIP Codes for *Dental Assistants***

<i>Dental Assistants</i>
TOP 124000: Dental Occupations
TOP 124010: Dental Assistant
CIP 51.0601: Dental Assisting/Assistant
CIP 51.0699: Dental Services and Allied Professions, Other
CIP 51.1101: Pre-Dentistry Studies

According to TOP data, **two** community colleges supply the region with awards for this occupation: **Palomar College** and **San Diego Mesa College**. According to CIP data, **six** non-community colleges supply the region with awards: **Brightwood College-San Diego, Brightwood College-Vista, Concorde Career College-San Diego, Pima Medical Institute-Chula Vista, United Education Institute-Chula Vista, and United Education Institute-UEI College San Marcos** (Exhibit 5).

**Exhibit 5: Number of Awards (Certificates and Degrees) Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions (Program Year 2014-15 through PY2017-18 Average)**

TOP6 or CIP	TOP6 or CIP Title	3-Yr Annual Average CC Awards (PY15-16 to PY17-18)	Other Educational Institutions 3-Yr Annual Average Awards (PY14-15 to PY16-17)	3-Yr Total Average Supply (PY14-15 to PY17-18)
124010	Dental Assistant	<b>60</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>60</b>
	• Palomar	31	0	
	• San Diego Mesa	29	0	
51.0601	Dental Assisting/ Assistant	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>363</b>
	• Brightwood College-San Diego	0	44	

<sup>7</sup> TOP data comes from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart (datamart.cccco.edu) and CIP data comes from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data).

• Brightwood College-Vista	0	58	
• Concorde Career College-San Diego	0	103	
• Pima Medical Institute-Chula Vista	0	55	
• United Education Institute-Chula Vista	0	49	
• United Education Institute-UEI College San Marcos	0	54	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>

## Demand vs. Supply

Comparing labor demand (annual openings) with labor supply<sup>8</sup> suggests that there is a **supply gap** for this occupation in San Diego County, with **667** annual openings and **423** awards. Comparatively, there are **7,477** annual openings in California and **3,813** awards<sup>9</sup> (Exhibit 6).

### Exhibit 6: Labor Demand (Annual Openings) Compared with Labor Supply (Average Annual Awards)

Community Colleges and Other Postsecondary Educational Institutions	Demand (Annual Openings)	Supply (Total Annual Average Supply)	Supply Gap or <b>Oversupply</b>
San Diego	667	423	<b>244</b>
California	7,477	3,813	<b>3,664</b>

**Please note:** This is a basic analysis of supply and demand of labor. The data does not include workers currently in the labor force who could fill these positions or workers who are not captured by publicly available data. This data should be used to discuss the potential gaps or oversupply of workers; however, it should not be the only basis for determining whether or not a program should be developed.

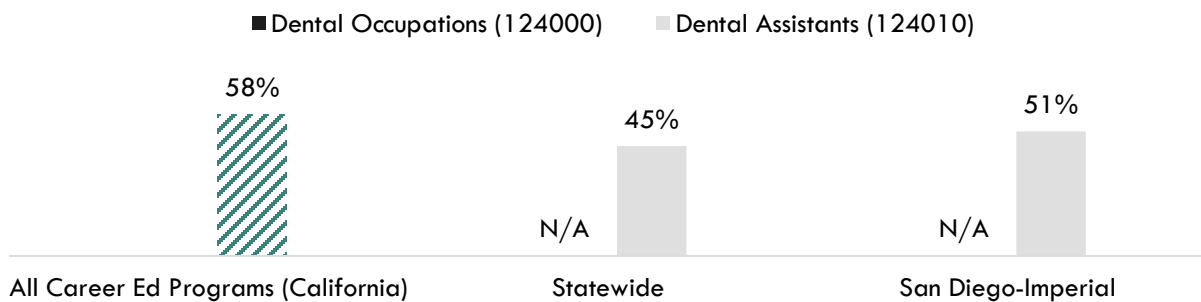
<sup>8</sup> Labor supply can be found from two different sources: EMSI or the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart. EMSI uses CIP codes while MIS uses TOP codes. Different coding systems result in differences in the supply numbers.

<sup>9</sup> "Supply and Demand," Centers of Excellence Student Outcomes, [coecc.net/Supply-and-Demand.aspx](http://coecc.net/Supply-and-Demand.aspx).

## Student Outcomes and Regional Comparisons

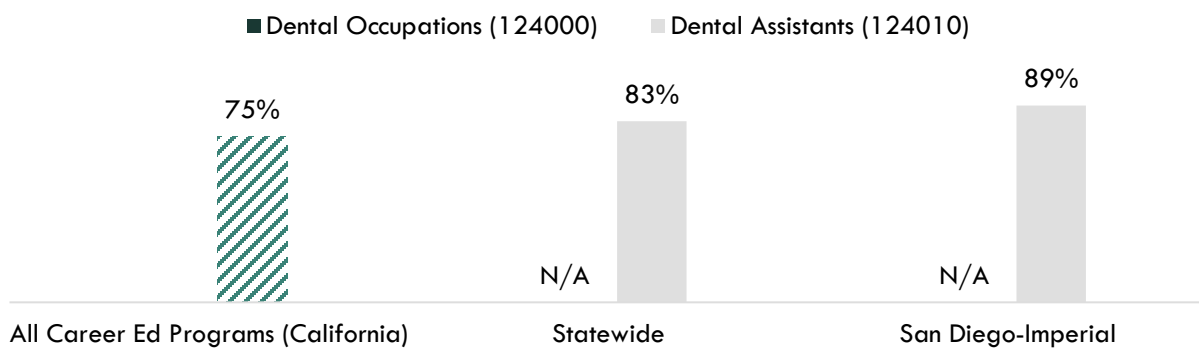
According to the California Community Colleges LaunchBoard, 51 percent of students in the San Diego-Imperial region earned a living wage after completing a program related to *Dental Assistants*, compared to 45 percent statewide and 58 percent of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 7a).

**Exhibit 7a: Proportion of Students Who Earned a Living Wage, PY2015-16<sup>10</sup>**



According to the California Community Colleges LaunchBoard, 89 percent of students in the San Diego-Imperial region obtained a job closely related to their field of study after completing a program related to *Dental Assistants*, compared to 83 percent statewide and 75 percent of students in Career Education programs in general across the state (Exhibit 7b).

**Exhibit 7b: Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study, PY2014-15<sup>11</sup>**



<sup>10</sup> Among completers and skills builders who exited, the proportion of students who attained a living wage.

<sup>11</sup> Most recent year with available data is Program Year 2014-15. Percentage of Students in a Job Closely Related to Field of Study: Among students who responded to the CTEOS, the percentage reporting employment in the same or similar field as their program of study.

## Top Employers and Work Locations

Between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2019, the top five employers in San Diego County for this occupation were Pacific Dental Services, Western Dental Services, Smile Brands, Interdent, and Vista Community Clinic (Exhibit 8).

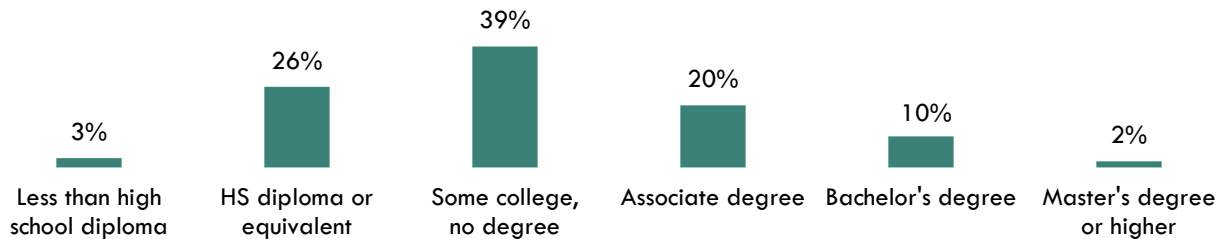
**Exhibit 8: Top Employers in San Diego County for Dental Assistants<sup>12</sup>**

Top Employers	
• Pacific Dental Services Incorporated	• Western Dental
• Western Dental Services	• Loyal Source
• Smile Brands	• Neighborhood Healthcare
• Interdent	• Family Health Centers Of San Diego
• Vista Community Clinic	• U.S. Government

## Skills, Education, and Certifications

Exhibit 9 indicates the educational attainment for the occupation found currently in the national labor force. There is no typical on-the-job training for this profession. The typical entry-level education is a postsecondary non-degree award.<sup>13</sup>

**Exhibit 9: National Educational Attainment of Dental Assistants<sup>14</sup>**



<sup>12</sup> Burning Glass Technologies, "Labor Insight Real-Time Labor Market Information Tool." 2017-2019.

<sup>13</sup> Emsi 2020.01; QCEW, Non-QCEW, Self-Employed.

<sup>14</sup> "Educational Attainment for Workers 25 Years and Older by Detailed Occupation," Bureau of Labor Statistics, last modified October 18, 2018. [bls.gov/emp/tables/educational-attainment.htm](https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/educational-attainment.htm).



Exhibit 10 lists the top specialized, soft, and software skills that appeared in online job postings between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2019

**Exhibit 10: Top Skills for Dental Assistants in San Diego County<sup>15</sup>**

Specialized Skills	Soft Skills	Software Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• X-Rays</li> <li>• Dentistry</li> <li>• Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation</li> <li>• Patient Preparation</li> <li>• Orthodontics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time Management</li> <li>• Communication Skills</li> <li>• Bilingual</li> <li>• Spanish</li> <li>• Self-Starter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microsoft Excel</li> <li>• Dentrix</li> <li>• ActiveX</li> <li>• Word Processing</li> <li>• Microsoft Word</li> </ul>

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<sup>15</sup> Burning Glass Technologies, "Labor Insight Real-Time Labor Market Information Tool." 2017-2019.

### **Important Disclaimers**

All representations included in this report have been produced from primary research and/or secondary review of publicly and/or privately available data and/or research reports. This study examines the most recent data available at the time of the analysis; however, data sets are updated regularly and may not be consistent with previous reports. Efforts have been made to qualify and validate the accuracy of the data and the report findings; however, neither the Centers of Excellence for Labor Market Research (COE), COE host district, nor California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office are responsible for the applications or decisions made by individuals and/or organizations based on this study or its recommendations.

This workforce demand report uses state and federal job projection data that was 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.