



## *Dental Hygiene Program Technical Standards*

The Southwestern Community College District is committed to the principle of diversity in all areas. The Dental Hygiene Program, as part of the Southwestern Community College District, is committed to the principle of equal opportunity. The Dental Hygiene Program does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, disabled veteran or Vietnam era veteran status. In that spirit, admission to the Dental Hygiene Program is open to all qualified individuals and complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

As an accredited Dental Hygiene Program, Southwestern College adheres to the standards promulgated by the American Dental Association, Commission on Dental Accreditation. Technical standards are not requirements of admission into the program. People interested in applying for admission to the program should review these standards to develop a better understanding of the physical abilities and behavioral characteristics necessary to successfully complete the program. When requested, the College will provide reasonable accommodations to otherwise qualified students with properly verified disabilities.

The education of a dental hygienist requires assimilation of knowledge, acquisition of skills, and development of judgment through patient care experiences in preparation for independent and appropriate decisions required in dental hygiene practice. The Dental Hygiene Program has the responsibility to the public to assure that its graduates can become fully competent dental hygienists, capable of delivering quality care in a timely manner and preserving the health and well-being of the patients they serve. Thus, it is important that persons admitted, retained, and graduated possess the intelligence; integrity; respect for the rights, privileges, and property of others; compassion; humanitarian concern; and physical and emotional capacity necessary to practice dental hygiene.

Retention decisions are based not only on satisfactory academic achievement but also on non-academic factors that serve to ensure that the candidate can complete the technical standards of the program required for graduation. Technical standards, as distinguished from academic standards, refer to those physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities required for satisfactory completion of all aspects of the curriculum, and the development of professional attributes required of all students at graduation.

With these principles in mind, students must be able to meet the following technical standards, without accommodation, or with reasonable accommodation. The use of a trained intermediary is not acceptable in clinical situations. A student's judgments and skills may not be mediated by reliance upon someone else's power of selection and observation, or clinical ability.

## ***Fundamental Program Requirements***

Southwestern College (The College) recognizes the award of an Associate of Science (A.S.) in Dental Hygiene degree carries with it the full authority of the institution and communicates to those who might seek the services of the bearer that he or she is competent to practice dental hygiene. The A.S. degree is a broad degree unique in that the graduate is prepared and upon licensure is allowed to practice all disciplines of the dental hygiene profession. This requires that the student in the curriculum acquire didactic knowledge as well as learning skills and attitudes essential to the profession and agreed upon by the faculty as requisite for the practice of dental hygiene. The student requires both cognitive and technical skills to negotiate this curriculum.

## ***Essential Functions***

The College is mindful of the unique nature of the dental hygiene curriculum. Applicants must possess the skills and abilities that will allow them to successfully complete the course of study and receive the full benefit of the education. In the process the student is required to perform treatment on the patients of the Dental Hygiene Program. The Dental Hygiene Program has the responsibility of ensuring the safety of the patients. This includes the completion of treatment safely and within an acceptable amount of time. With this in mind the student must be able to meet the following technical standards with or without accommodation.

### **1. Motor Skills**

*General:* “Students ordinarily should have sufficient motor function such that they are able to execute movements reasonably required to provide general care and treatment to patients.”

*Specific:* “It is required that a student possess the motor skills necessary to directly perform palpation, percussion, auscultation, and other diagnostic maneuvers, basic laboratory tests, and diagnostic procedures. Such actions required coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium, and functional uses of the senses of touch and vision.”

*Specific:* “A student must be able to perform basic life support (including CPR), transfer and position disabled patients, physically restrain adults who lack motor control, and position and reposition self around patient and chair in a sitting or standing position. The student must be able to operate foot controls utilizing fine movements, operate handpieces requiring controlled dental movements of less than one millimeter, and utilize hand instrumentation.”

### **2. Sensory/Observation**

*General:* “A student must be able to acquire a defined level of required information as presented through demonstrations and experiences in the basic and dental sciences.”

*Specific:* “This includes but is not limited to information conveyed through physiologic and pharmacological demonstrations in animals and through microbiological cultures and microscopic images of microorganisms and tissues in normal and pathologic states. A student must be able to acquire information from written documents and to visualize

information presented in images from paper, films, slides, or video. A student must interpret x-ray and other graphic images, with or without the use of assistive devices. A student must have functional use of visual, auditory, and somatic sensation while being enhanced by the functional use of sensory modalities.”

*General:* “A student must be able to observe a patient accurately, at a distance and close at hand, and observe and appreciate nonverbal communications when performing dental procedures or administering medications.”

*Specific:* “A student must be able to perform visual and tactile dental hygiene examinations and treatment including use of visual acuity, accommodation, and color vision to discern differences and variation in color, shape, and general appearance between normal and abnormal, soft and hard tissues. Use of tactile senses may be either direct palpation or indirect through instrumentation. A student must also possess the visual acuity to read charts, records, small print and handwritten notation, and distinguish colors intra and extra orally.”

### **3. Communication**

*General:* “A student must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients; convey or exchange information at a level allowing development of a health history; identify problems presented; explain alternative solutions; and give directions during treatment and post-treatment. Communication includes speech and writing. The student must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in oral and written form with all members of the health care team.”

*Specific:* “A student must have sufficient facility with English: to retrieve information from tests and lectures and communicate concepts on written exams and patient charts; elicit patient backgrounds; describe patient changes in moods, activity, and posture; and coordinate patient care with all members of the health care team.”

*Specific:* “In any case where a student’s ability to communicate through these sensory modalities is compromised, the student must demonstrate alternative means and/or ability to acquire and demonstrate the essential information conveyed in this fashion.”

### **4. Cognitive**

*General:* “A student must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate, and synthesize.”

*Specific:* “In addition, a student must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial relationships of structures. Problem-solving, a critical skill demanded of dental hygienists, requires all of these intellectual abilities. A student must be able to perform these problem-solving skills in a timely fashion.”

### **5. Behavioral**

*General:* “A student must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of his or her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients, and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients.”

*Specific:* “A student must be able to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. He or she must be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility, and to learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical care of patients. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interests, and motivation, are all personal qualities that will be assessed during the educational process. Further, a student must be able to manage apprehensive patients with a range of moods and behaviors in a tactful, congenial, personal manner so as not to alienate or antagonize them. A student must reasonably be expected to accept criticism and respond by appropriate modification of behavior.”

### ***Disability Support Services***

Southwestern College provides programs and services that promote access for students with disabilities to all campus, academic, and vocational activities. The goal of the program is to support the students' educational goals.

Disability Support Services offer special counseling, specialized assessment for learning and speech/language disabilities, sign language interpreters, note takers, test proctoring, equipment loans, liaison with campus personnel, and other disability services based on students' needs.

Disability Support Services also offers classes in speech/language, adaptive computers, adaptive physical education courses, and basic academic skills for students with verified disabilities.

Interested students can obtain more information about these services and start their application process by contacting the Disability Support Services Office (Room 422), by telephone 619-482-6512 or TTY 619-482-6470 for an appointment, or email [dss@swccd.edu](mailto:dss@swccd.edu).

### ***Diagnostic Assessment Services***

Diagnostic assessment services are available through Disability Support Services for learning or speech/language disabilities. Students should contact Disability Support Services in Room 422 or telephone 619-482-6512 for an appointment.

### ***High Tech Center***

Disability Support Services runs a High Tech Center which includes computer instruction, specialized hardware and software for Macintosh and personal computers, training with assistive technology, and open laboratory hours.

### ***Student Accommodation Requests***

Once a disability is verified, students with disabilities who are authorized for academic accommodations by Disability Support Services should discuss options with their instructors during the first two weeks of classes.

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*This policy is modified to meet the needs of the Southwestern College Dental Hygiene Program from a sample draft document from the American Dental Educators' Association.*