

PENNSYLVANIA STATE BOARD OF DENTISTRY



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Scope of Practice for Expanded Function Dental Assistants

by Christopher P. Grovich, Esquire

On April 29, Governor Rendell signed House Bill 602. This new law, also known as Act 19 of 2010, made changes to the scope of practice for expanded function dental assistants (EFDA) and provided for the addition of one EFDA and one additional dentist to the Pennsylvania State Board of Dentistry.

Act 19, which becomes effective on June 28, allows EFDAs to perform the following functions under the direct supervision of a dentist:

- Place and contour amalgam and other restorative materials,
- Perform coronal polishing,
- Perform fluoride treatments, including fluoride varnish, and
- Take impressions of teeth for athletic appliances.

“Direct supervision” means that a dentist, “is in the dental office or treatment facility, personally diagnoses the condition to be treated, personally authorizes the procedure and remains in the dental office or treatment facility while the procedure is being performed and, before dismissal of the patient, personally evaluates the work performed.”

Act 19 specifically forbids EFDAs from performing complete or limited examination, diagnosis and treatment planning, surgical or cutting procedures of hard or soft tissue, prescribing drugs, medicaments, or work authorizations, taking impressions other than for study models, diagnostic casts or athletic appliances, and final inspection and approval of restorative and other treatment which affects occlusion and any necessary occlusal adjustments. Additionally, EFDAs may not perform pulp capping, pulpotomy or other endodontic procedures, placement and intraoral adjustments of fixed and removable prosthetic appliances, or administration of local anesthesia, parenteral

or inhalational sedation or general anesthesia.

Under the new law, the board is given 18 months to promulgate regulations in order to implement this act. However, because the law takes effect a mere 60 days after being signed by the Governor, EFDAs will be permitted to perform these new, expanded functions prior to the regulations taking effect.

Therefore, the board wishes to remind all licensees, and especially dentists, that while the new law permits EFDAs to perform additional functions in the dental office, dentists are not permitted to delegate duties to individuals who are not competent to perform them. Section 33.204 of the board’s regulations states, “[D]ental procedures shall be assigned to a competent person who the dentist deems appropriate as defined by and consistent with” the board’s Practice Act. Similarly, section 33.211(a)(3) defines unprofessional conduct as including the delegation to a person, “duties that the dentist knows, or has reason to know, the person is not competent to perform or not authorized to perform.”

While our dental community adjusts to the newly expanded scope of practice for EFDAs, the board encourages all of its licensees and certificate holders to seek the necessary training prior to performing unfamiliar functions in the office. If a dentist or EFDA feels that additional training may be needed prior to performing these new, expanded functions listed in Act 19, the board certainly encourages them to seek out training through existing continuing education courses or other means. As always, the primary function of the board is to protect the public health, welfare and safety, and we thank you for helping us achieve that goal.

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