

ADEA TASK FORCE ON THE EDUCATION OF ORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN EMERGING WORKFORCE MODELS

Introduction

In September 2009, the Board of Directors of the American Dental Education Association (ADEA) approved the creation of the ADEA Task Force on the Education of Oral Health Professionals in Emerging Workforce Models. Its charge was to “enunciate a set of principles to guide the educational preparation of oral health professionals in emerging workforce models.” The core values and key assumptions that guided the Task Force’s work are articulated below, followed by the *ADEA Guiding Principles for the Education of Oral Health Professionals in Emerging Workforce Models*.

Core Values

ADEA believes that with appropriate levels of education and supervision oral health professionals in emerging workforce models can provide quality care, contribute to increasing access to oral health services for all, and help to improve the oral health of the nation.

ADEA acknowledges the reality that most of the emerging workforce models are intended to increase access to oral health care for underserved populations. ADEA believes that expanding the capacity of the oral health workforce will increase access to oral health care *for all* and, consequently, have a positive impact on access to care for underserved populations.

ADEA believes that its role, in collaboration with its member institutions, is to anticipate and prepare for changes to the curriculum and the academic environment that emerging workforce models will require as states modify their practice acts to increase the capacity of the oral health workforce. The Association’s role is not to develop new workforce models, but to ensure the quality of the educational preparation of oral health professionals in these emerging models.

Notwithstanding the creation of emerging workforce models, ADEA believes that the extended use of existing allied dental professionals can contribute to expanding the capacity of the oral health workforce, thereby further increasing access to oral health care *for all*.

Key Assumptions

- Demographic shifts in society have major implications for the future composition of the oral health workforce. Professionals in the workforce of the future should possess values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that enable them to competently meet changing societal needs.
- A single standard of quality should apply when the same service is provided by different members of the oral health team.
- The creation of new workforce models will require modification to the educational preparation of existing oral health team members to support the successful integration of emerging models.
- The Guiding Principles articulated for emerging workforce models have application to and implications for the education of all oral health professionals.

ADEA GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE EDUCATION OF ORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN EMERGING WORKFORCE MODELS

The *ADEA Guiding Principles for the Education of Oral Health Professionals in Emerging Workforce Models* aim to maintain high standards for the education, preparation, and competency of oral health professionals in emerging workforce models. As states modify their dental practice acts to expand the capacity of the oral health workforce, these principles can inform and influence the education of oral health professionals in emerging workforce models to ensure that they possess the values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed to provide quality oral health care to all.

The American Dental Education Association encourages institutions, organizations, and policymakers that are designing oral health workforce models, and those who are developing educational programs to prepare these professionals, to incorporate these Guiding Principles into their planning and decision-making.

Principle 1

Educational programs for oral health professionals in emerging workforce models should be based on clearly defined goals and desired educational outcomes. These programs should be competency-based, providing learning experiences to ensure that students attain the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to provide quality care in a collaborative, interprofessional environment.

- Competency domains should be consistent across educational programs and should align with the ADEA Competencies for Entry into the Allied Dental Professions. Where the scope of practice for emerging workforce models extends beyond the allied dental competencies, competency domains should align with the ADEA Competencies for the New General Dentist. Competency domains for oral health professionals in emerging workforce models should include communication, culture and diversity, evidence based patient care, health policy and advocacy, health promotion and disease prevention, professionalism and ethics, and systems thinking and financial management. Specific competencies within each domain should reflect the scope of practice of each professional position.
- The academic dental community should be involved in decisions regarding the length and rigor of educational programs. The academic dental community possesses the expertise and experience to ensure that graduates have sufficient time to achieve competencies and demonstrate the values, attitudes, knowledge, experience, and skills (including critical thinking, ethical decision-making, teamwork, communication, and cultural competency) needed to provide care at the level defined by their scope of practice.
- Curricula should include instruction in biomedical, clinical, behavioral, social, and economic sciences. Educational programs should expose students to experiences working with dental, allied dental, and other health professionals in integrated clinical settings to ensure that all members of the oral health team understand the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team.

Principle 2

Educational programs for oral health professionals in emerging workforce models should have appropriate processes to ensure program quality and assessment of graduates' competency.

- National accreditation standards should be developed and implemented by an entity approved by the U.S. Department of Education to ensure ongoing quality and continuity across educational programs. National accreditation, or universally accepted certification or credentialing, is needed to ensure consistency and quality across educational programs.
- The education, knowledge, skills, and experience needed to safely provide oral health services, as defined by scope of practice, should inform decisions about the appropriate level of supervision. These decisions should be made with input from the academic dental community.

Principle 3

Educational programs for oral health professionals in emerging workforce models should ensure that students attain the skills necessary to engage individuals from diverse populations in decisions about their oral health.

- Educational programs should emphasize the principles of population-based public health science as a means of engaging diverse populations and communities in the prevention and control of oral diseases and in reducing oral health disparities.
- Educational programs should ensure that graduates attain the values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed to provide care that is respectful of a patient's culture, class, race, ethnic, and socioeconomic background.
- Educational programs should implement strategies to recruit, retain, and promote individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Principle 4

Educational programs for oral health professionals in emerging workforce models should be evaluated continuously to determine their success in meeting their defined goals and educational outcomes.

- Educational programs should ensure that graduates are educated in a timely, efficient, and equitable manner, and possess the values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed to provide safe, appropriate, patient-centered care.
- Educational programs should prepare graduates to meet a single standard of quality for the same service provided by other members of the oral health team.

Conclusion

The American Dental Education Association believes that with appropriate education and preparation, oral health professionals in emerging workforce models can provide quality care and make meaningful contributions to expanding the capacity of the oral health workforce, thereby increasing access to oral health care *for all*. ADEA encourages institutions, organizations, and policymakers that are designing oral health workforce models, and those who are developing educational programs to prepare these professionals, to incorporate these Guiding Principles into their planning and decision-making.