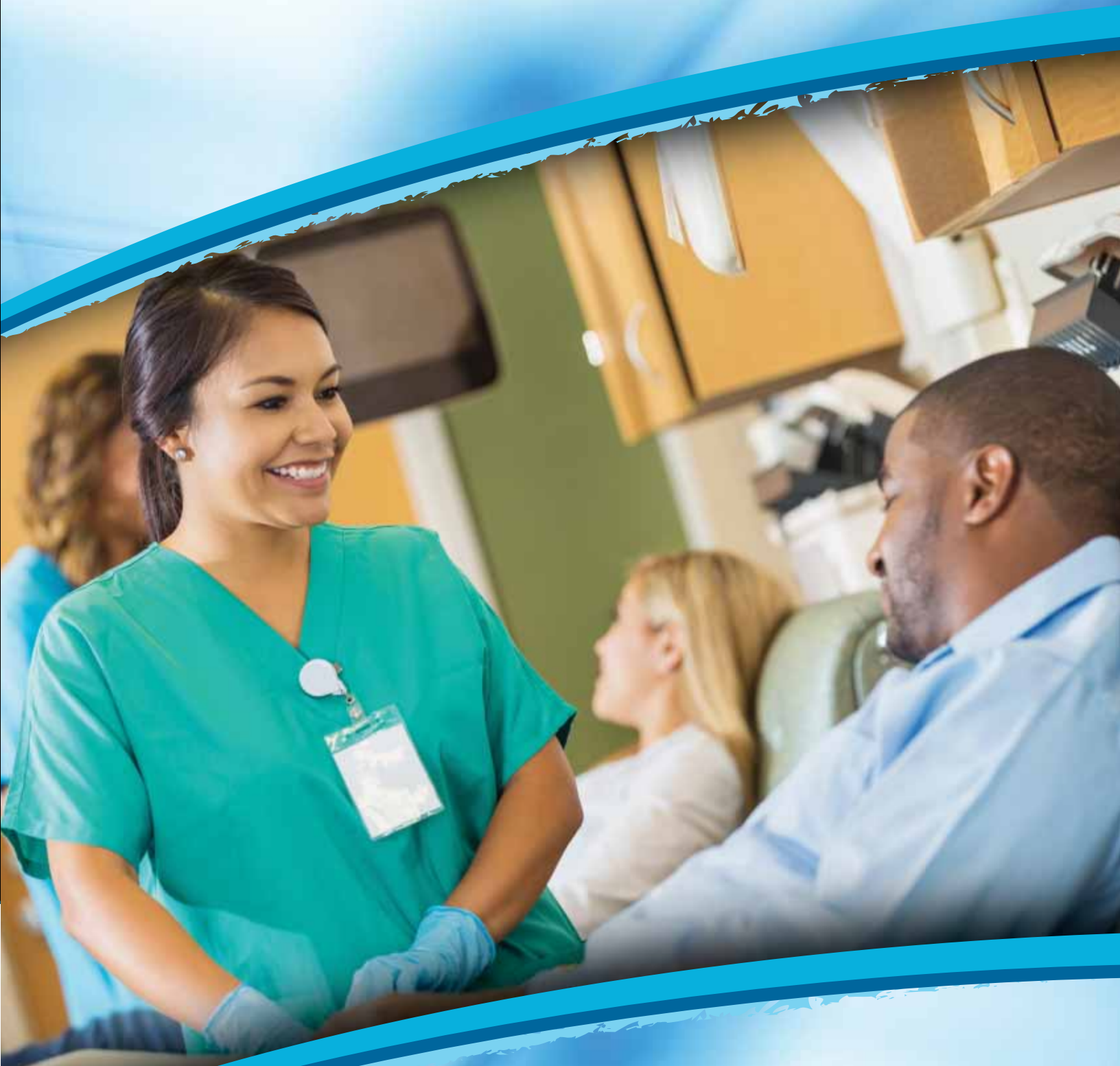


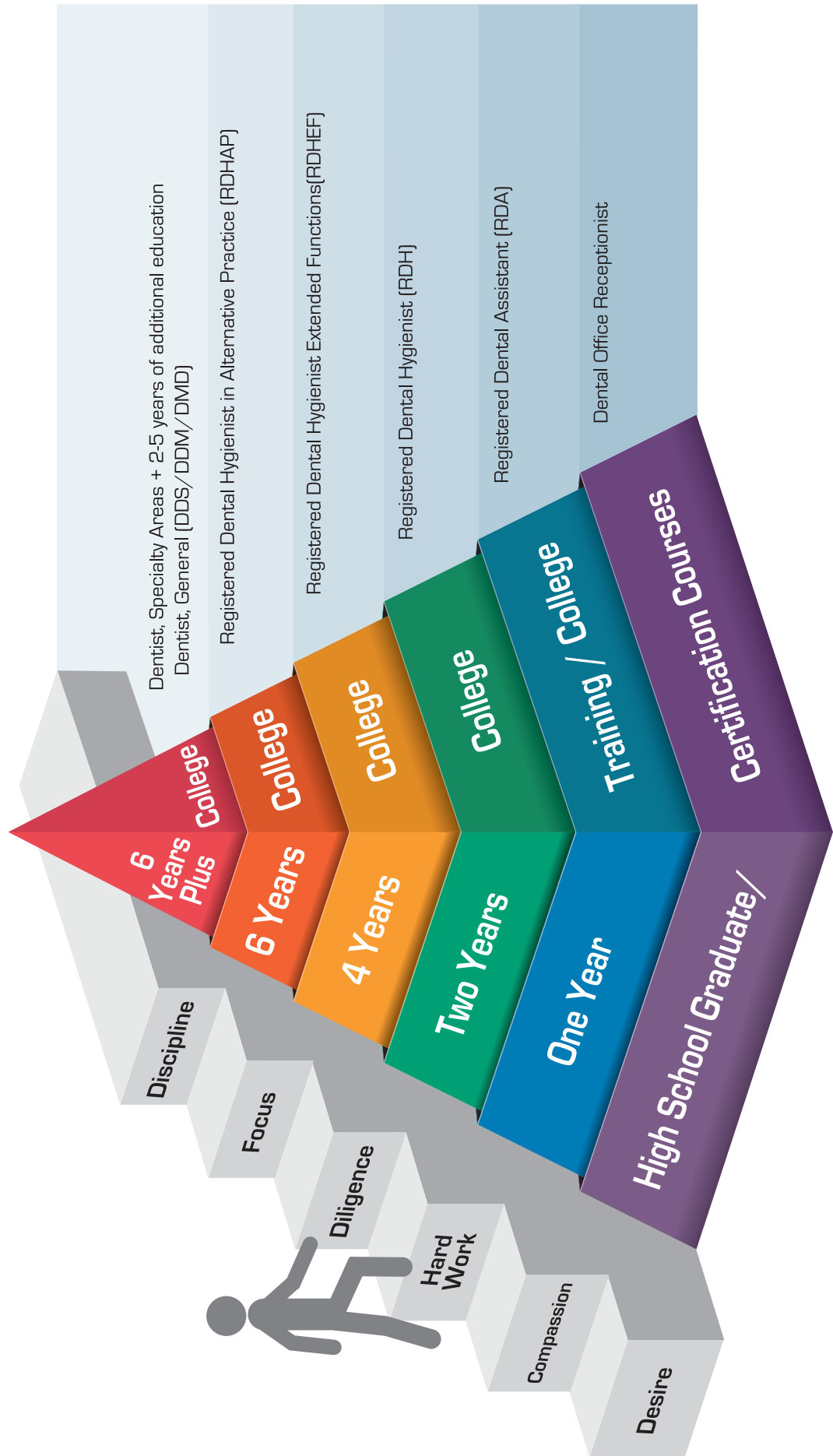
# Exploring Health Careers: What Do You Want To Be?



Edited by:  
**Valerie A. Fisher, RN, MA**  
Central Region Deputy Sector Navigator  
Health Workforce Initiative  
[www.ca-hwi.org](http://www.ca-hwi.org)



# Dental Services Career Pathways



## Dental Office Receptionist

**Job Description:** Responsible for greeting and assisting patients. Receptionists make appointments for patients and maintain their accounts. They help coordinate the dentist's schedule and bill patients and their insurance companies.

**Educational Requirements:** Receptionists typically need a high school diploma and good communication skills in concert with computer literacy. Bi-lingual skills are preferred. A course in medical terminology is helpful in securing employment.

**Salary Range:** \$28,000 to \$30,000 per year



**For Additional Information:**

QR Code:

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/office-and-administrative-support/receptionists.htm>

Video Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9Ynpybc5cg>

## Registered Dental Assistant (RDA)

**Job Description:** Registered dental assistants perform many tasks, ranging from assisting dentist with patient procedures (preparing cements/impressions) to common office duties such as answering the phone, confirming and scheduling appointments, managing dental records and procuring insurance information. In California, registered dental assistants may also: polish patient's teeth, remove sutures/dressings, procure full mouth x-rays, administer topical medication, give fluoride treatments and take teeth impressions all under the direction of a licensed dentist.

**Educational Requirements:** Most dental assisting programs take about 1 year to complete and lead to a certificate of completion. Some colleges offer 2 year programs leading to an associate's degree. You will find dental assisting programs at your local community college or private technical schools. The Dental Board of California monitors and approves all Registered Dental Assisting educational programs. Be sure your college is listed on their website at: <http://www.dbc.ca.gov/applicants/rda/courses.shtml>

**Salary Range:** \$35,000 to \$40,000 per year



**For Additional Information:**

QR Code:

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dental-assistants.htm>

Video Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHfvp5Cz30M>





## Registered Dental Hygienist (RDH)

**Job Description:** A Dental Hygienist (RDH) provides education, clinical and therapeutic services to the public in an effort to maintain and promote good oral health. They also remove soft/hard deposits from teeth, teach patients how to practice good oral hygiene and provide other preventative dental care services. Dental Hygienists (RDH) also take dental x-rays, examine patient's teeth and gums, record the presence of disease in the mouth, administer medications and anesthetics, place and carve filling materials and smooth metal restorations.

**Educational Requirements:** Dental hygienists (RDH) need an associate's degree in dental hygiene. Programs typically take 2 years to complete, and offer laboratory, clinical, and classroom instruction. Areas of study include anatomy, physiology, nutrition, radiography, pathology, medical ethics, head and neck anatomy, and periodontics, which is the study of gum disease.

High school students interested in becoming dental hygienists should take courses in biology, chemistry, and math. Most dental hygiene programs also require applicants to have completed at least 1 year of college prior to admission. Specific entrance requirements vary by school. There are 16 CA Community Colleges that offer Dental Hygiene programs.

In California, some Registered Dental Hygienist (RDH) have additional training and education and may function as "Registered Dental Hygienist Extended Functions (RDHEF)" or "Registered Dental Hygienist in Alternative Practice (RDHAP)". Individuals who practice in expanded roles will hold advanced degrees such as a Bachelor's/Master's degree.

**Salary Range: \$72,000 to \$97,000 per year**



**For Additional Information:**

QR Code:

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dental-hygienists.htm>

Video Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPqPKsHcNsl>







## Dentist, General (DDS /DDM/DMD)

**Job Description:** Dentists routinely examine, diagnose, and treat diseases, injuries, and malformations of teeth and gums. A dentist may treat diseases of nerve, pulp, and other dental tissues affecting oral hygiene and retention of teeth. They may also fit dental appliances and provide preventive and restorative dental care.

**Educational Requirements:** All dental schools require applicants to have completed science courses, such as biology and chemistry, before entering dental school. Students need at least a bachelor's degree, although no specific major is required. However, majoring in a science such as biology, might increase one's chances of being accepted. Requirements vary by school.

College undergraduates who plan on applying to dental school usually take the Dental Admission Test (DAT) during their junior year. Admission to dental school can be competitive. Dental schools use this test along with other factors, such as grade point average, interviews, and recommendations, to admit students into their programs.

For more information on Dental Admission Test (DAT), visit American Dental Association's Admission Test information page.

Dental school programs are four years in duration and include coursework in subjects such as local anesthesia, periodontics (the study of oral disease and health), and radiology. All programs at dental schools include clinical experience in which students work directly with patients under the supervision of a licensed dentist.

Completion of a dental program results in one of three degrees: Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS), Doctor of Dental Medicine (DDM), and Doctor of Medical Dentistry (DMD). For a review of dental specialties (such as an Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon), which require between 2-5 years additional years of education, visit American Dental Association's Careers in Dentistry.

**Salary Range: \$150,000 to \$210,000 per year**



### For Additional Information:

QR Code:

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dentists.htm>

Video Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zt5abAU6cWE>





**Health Workforce Initiative**

<https://ca-hwi.org/>



POWERED BY

**California Community Colleges**