

Friday, May 1, 2020

To our fellow hygienists,

Per the recommendations issued by the [NC State Board of Dental Examiners](#) on April 28, 2020, regarding providing dental services during the COVID-19 state of emergency, NCDHA has been proactively collaborating with numerous state leaders on how to best achieve guidance. It is the recommendation of the NCDHA Executive Board that all hygienists read and understand the updated [ADA Return to Work Interim Guidance Toolkit](#), as well as the [CDC](#) and [OSHA](#) recommendations when returning to work. We strongly advise each hygienist to have an open and non-confrontational discussion, as needed, with their employers/teams about their concerns and to create a plan for reopening in the best interest of the health and safety of our patients and employees.

Dentistry was and still remains an essential workforce during the pandemic, as identified by Governor Cooper in [Executive Order #121](#) and therefore never mandated offices to close, just as he has not mandated us to reopen during a specific phase. As an essential workforce, each office made the decision to follow the guidelines of the CDC and ADA to temporarily halt “elective” procedures. The statement from the Dental Board was to reinforce that the standard of care has changed and that PPE requirements have changed. Once offices have a strategy that their employees feel comfortable with, along with appropriate PPE and with patient care in mind, they are free to reopen whenever they choose, as they have been free to do all along.

The wording of the Dental Board’s statement was specific and targeted regarding the OSHA, ADA, and CDC guidelines for patient care/safety and employee health protections are to be followed as referenced. It is not business as usual, it is the new way of practicing dentistry. NCDHA supports the board's statement **"failure to follow heightened infection control, sterilization, and patient safety recommendations may be viewed as a failure to meet the standard of care necessary for offering treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic."**

We understand your concerns and hear all the questions being asked. Ensuring your safety as a hygienist and the environment in which you will be working is the safest and healthiest place for you to be is our utmost priority. If you continue to have specific concerns regarding your return to work, please feel free to reach out to us at [info@ncdha.org](mailto:info@ncdha.org) and we will do our best to address your individual concerns. We will continue to update all resources and guidelines available at [www.ncdha.org](http://www.ncdha.org).



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