

# Missouri Dental Hygienists 2026 Facts



- Licensed and regulated by the Missouri Dental Board
- Licensure includes graduation from an accredited program, with didactic, clinical, and jurisprudence exams



- Education is generally 3 years in length (includes prerequisites)
- 84 credit hours for an associate's degree
- 118 credit hours for a bachelor's degree
- 3016 clock hours with 681 supervised preclinical/clinical hours of instruction



- There are currently six dental hygiene programs in Missouri
- Missouri has lost four dental hygiene program sites in the past few years due to lack of funding
- There is a need for dental hygiene providers, particularly in rural areas of Missouri
- Questions? Email us: [info@missouridha.org](mailto:info@missouridha.org)

## Dental Hygienist Perform Preventive and Therapeutic Oral Health Services

- **Preliminary clinical exams of teeth and oral tissues**
- **Radiographs (x-rays)**
- **Oral Health Education**
- **Scaling and polishing of teeth**
- **Fillings with additional education**
- **Dental sealant placement**
- **Local anesthesia (pain control)**
- **Identification and treatment of gum disease**
- **Fluoride application**
- **Nitrous-oxide administration**

- 107 out of 114 Missouri counties are designated as Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (Dental HPSAs)
- As of December 2025, the Missouri Dental Board data indicates there are 3629 dental hygienists, 2674 general dentists and 558 specialists with an active license and a Missouri address
- With a dentist exam, hygienists can work without a dentist present up to one year
- Dental hygienists could be a part of the solution to the oral health crisis in Missouri if allowed to work to the full scope of practice and if burdensome supervision restrictions are removed

MDHA supports HB 1847 (Rep. John Hewkin) and

SB 988 (Sen. Ben Brown):

### **Dentist and Dental Hygienist Licensure Compact**

- Interstate compacts are contracts/agreements between several states
- Requires seven states to agree before it begins
- Now implemented in IA, WA, TN, WI, KS, MN, OH, VA, ME, CO, AK, and NE
- Strengthens licensure portability and allows for multistate licensure
- Missouri borders 8 states
- Similar to use of a driver's license
- Dentists and hygienists who are licensed in one compact state member will be able to practice in other participating states through a "compact privilege"

#### **Dentists and dental hygienists who want to apply in a participating state for a compact privilege must have:**

- An active and unrestricted license in a compact state
- Graduation from an education program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA)
- Passage of the National Board Examination
- Completion of a clinical assessment (ex. board exam)
- No disqualifying criminal history

**Individual states will still have authority to uphold scopes of practice and individual rules.**

**Similar compacts in Missouri include nursing, physical therapy, emergency medical system, psychology, audio and speech language, occupational therapy, and medical.**