

Dentists FAQs

I am a dentist licensed in Hawaii. May I engage in my scope of practice during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Pursuant to Governor Ige's [Sixth Supplementary Proclamation Amending and Restating Prior Proclamations and Executive Orders Related to the COVID-19 Emergency](#) (Sixth Supplementary Proclamation), dated April 25, 2020, "[h]ealthcare services and facilities" are identified as essential businesses or operations and include "[h]ospitals, clinics, physician offices, assisted living facilities, and other healthcare facilities and services." This definition includes dental services.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has provided guidance for dentists and dental healthcare personnel (DHCP) regarding interim infection prevention and control guidance for dental settings during the COVID-19 response. Guidance by the CDC is applicable to all licensed dentists pursuant to Hawaii Administrative Rules section 16-79-8 (Approved infection control practices). The rule provides that "[l]icensed dentists and licensed dental hygienists shall practice levels of infection control consistent with the guidelines and recommendations of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)[,] and the [American Dental Association] ADA."

The CDC has identified key concepts that apply to dental settings as follows:

- Dental settings have unique characteristics that warrant additional infection control considerations.
- Postpone elective procedures, surgeries, and non-urgent dental visits.
- Proactively communicate to both staff and patients the need for them to stay at home if sick.
- Know steps to take if a patient with COVID-19 symptoms enters your facility.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/dental-settings.html>

Importantly, "to protect staff and preserve personal protective equipment and patient care supplies, as well as expand available hospital capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that **dental facilities postpone elective procedures, surgeries, and non-urgent dental visits, and prioritize urgent and emergency visits and procedures now and for the coming several weeks.**"

<https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/statement-COVID.html>

In addition, the Board of Dentistry strongly recommends that you **check with the county in which you currently practice to determine whether you may reopen your office to provide services other than dental emergencies**^[2]. The contact information for each county is listed below:

- **County of Honolulu:** (808) 768-2489, COVID-19 Information Hotline
- **County of Kauai:** (808) 241-4903, Public Information Office
- **County of Maui:** (808) 270-7855, Office of the Mayor
- **County of Hawaii (Big Island):** (808) 935-0031, Civil Defense Agency

What are the personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements for dentists during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The CDC advises that dentists use the highest level of PPE or wear a “minimally acceptable combination of a surgical mask and a full-face shield.” **If the minimally acceptable combination of a surgical mask and a full-face shield is not available, the dentist should not perform any emergency dental care and should instead refer the patient to a clinician who has the appropriate PPE.** The ADA also recommends that dentists use the highest level of PPE available when treating patients to reduce the risk of exposure.

As the regulatory body for dentists, the Board of Dentistry reminds licensees that even during the COVID-19 pandemic, they are required to follow the Board’s statutes and rules, which include adhering to the guidelines and recommendations of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC, ADA, and various county proclamations.

As of April 27, 2020, the CDC provides, among other things, the following guidance:

- To address asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic transmission, implement source control (require facemasks or cloth face coverings) for everyone entering the dental setting (dental healthcare personnel^[1] and patients), regardless of whether they have COVID-19 symptoms.
- Actively screen everyone on the spot for fever and symptoms of COVID-19 before they enter the dental setting.
- Actively screen DHCP on the spot for fever and symptoms before every shift.

It is the licensed dentist’s responsibility to check the CDC’s website regularly for updates and revisions to these guidelines.

I am a dentist licensed in another state. Do I need to be licensed in Hawaii to practice dentistry in Hawaii during the COVID-19 pandemic? Do I need to be licensed in Hawaii to provide telehealth services within my scope of practice for Hawaii patients during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes to both questions. A valid Hawaii license issued pursuant to Hawaii Revised Statutes chapter 448 is required to engage in the practice of dentistry or dental surgery in the State, including telehealth (e.g., providing a consultation from another state to a Hawaii resident). To engage in telehealth, you must be licensed in your home state and

the state in which your patient currently resides. You must also abide by the laws and regulations of both states.

For further information, please see:

- Hawaii Revised Statutes section 448-1 (dentistry defined; exempted practices);
- Hawaii Administrative Rules section 16-79-9 (who may apply for a dental or dental hygiene license); and
- Hawaii Administrative Rules section 16-79-11 (documentation and credentials required for dental applicants).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, will the Board of Dentistry accept the new WREB, SRTA, CRDTS, or CDCA non-patient dental examination to fulfill the examination requirement for licensure?

No. The Board of Dentistry requires passage of the American Board of Dental Examiners (ADEX) examination. The grant of an exemption to this requirement is not available, even under special circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic.

For further information, please see:

- Hawaii Revised Statutes section 448-9.4 (American Board of Dental Examiners (ADEX) examination; regional examinations);
- Hawaii Administrative Rules section 16-79-9 (who may apply for a dental or dental hygiene license); and
- Hawaii Administrative Rules section 16-79-11 (documentation and credentials required for dental applicants).

Due to social distancing recommendations, the Board of Dentistry has not had an opportunity to meet to discuss any future modifications to the ADEX examination requirement, but it will consider this matter at a future date.

Due to social distancing recommendations, will the Board of Dentistry accept live-interactive continuing education (CE) webinars, in lieu of live-attended CE courses, to fulfill the CE requirement for licensure?

No. At this time, the statutes and rules that govern the practice of dentistry do not authorize the Board of Dentistry to grant exemptions to its CE requirements due to special circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Board may consider CE waivers or modifications, whereby licensees request a waiver or modification to the CE requirement due to disability, full-time active military service, illness, retirement, or undue hardship. The next biennial renewal CE period is from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2021.

For further information, please see:

- Hawaii Administrative Rules section 16-79-141 (continuing education categories);
- Hawaii Administrative Rules section 16-79-144 (biennial renewal); and

- Hawaii Administrative Rules section 16-79-147 (waiver or modification of requirements).

The Board of Dentistry has not had an opportunity to meet to discuss COVID19-related modifications to the CE requirement, but it will consider this matter at a future date.