

# **ORTHODONTIC ASSISTANT PERMIT**

Dr. Michael Payne

The redesign of the dental assistant and registered dental assistant scope of practice and educational requirements has been a long process extending over several years with many permutations, changes in statute, and negotiations amongst a number of stakeholders. After follow up bills to try and correct the original legislation the dental board concluded the direction of the negotiations and final design of the three specialty categories had compromised the career path for the restorative assistant. Plans to create three registered assistant categories were eliminated in the last round of negotiations in favor of permit categories specific to orthodontics and sedation assistants. Passage of AB 2637 changes the allowable duties for all levels of assistants starting January 1, 2010.

In place of “registered” assistant categories specific to orthodontics, the allowable duties for assistants were redistributed to create a career ladder favorable to orthodontics and orthodontic assisting. Unlicensed Dental Assistants will have an expanded range of duties and the option to perform additional duties after meeting the educational requirements of a board approved Orthodontic Assistant Permit course and meeting additional Dental Board requirements.

Existing registered dental assistants will receive an expanded range of duties as well. RDAs also have the option of taking the board approved Orthodontic Permit course to achieve the broadest range of allowable duties. We have included a chart to delineate the allowable duties for each assistant category.

Many dental assisting schools are developing Orthodontic Assistant Permit courses. During negotiations over the last several years, we have insisted on maintaining the option of teaching staff in office. The permit course will encompass a number of modules requiring 84 hours of instruction for DAs and 60 hours for RDAs.

In reviewing the materials from the dental board and comparing to other courses requiring board approval it was evident the individual orthodontist would find developing a complete course impractical. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 the CAO board viewed a presentation on creating an orthodontic assistant permit course meeting the requirements of the Dental Board of California and AB 2637. CAO approved the proposal with the intent of providing this packaged course to our member orthodontists to train staff in the office. Over the next several months the course will be developed and formatted for board approval. Once completed and hopefully accepted by the Dental Board our intention is to offer this course to our members. Each member could purchase the course from CAO, complete the Dental Board application and submit the application packet to the dental board to become a course provider. Each orthodontist could then train their RDAs and dental assistants in the office.

The dental board is in the process of developing the orthodontic assistant permit examination and has asked CAO for orthodontist experts to assist with the creation of the exam. Ideally the exam would be completed and available in January of 2010.

Once assistants have completed the course, completed the written examination, and submitted the completed permit application the dental board would grant the applicant an orthodontic assistant permit.