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Dental Career Services

Though requirements vary from state to state, all applicants for dental licensure in the United States must meet three basic requirements: an education requirement, a written examination requirement and a clinical examination requirement.

Education Requirement

The educational requirement in nearly all states is a DDS or DMD degree from a university-based dental education program accredited by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (ADA CODA).

Written Examination Requirement

All U.S. licensing jurisdictions require evidence that a candidate for licensure has passed Parts I and II of the written National Board Dental Examinations. Each examination is composed exclusively of multiple-choice test items. Part I is a comprehensive examination covering the basic biomedical sciences, dental anatomy and ethics. Part II is a comprehensive examination covering clinical dental subjects, including patient management.

Clinical Examination Requirement

Most states enforce a clinical examination requirement, and each state board of dentistry determines which exam they will accept. Most state boards rely on a regional testing agency to administer a clinical examination. A regional agency is formed when a group of state boards jointly develop and/or administer a clinical examination. Five regional agencies currently conduct the examinations used by all but four licensing jurisdictions: [Council of Interstate Testing Agencies \(CITA\)](#), [Central Regional Dental Testing Services, Inc. \(CRDTS\)](#), [Commission on Dental Competency Assessments \(CDCA\)](#) [Previously the NERB], [Western Regional Examination Board \(WREB\)](#), and the [Southern Regional Testing Agency, Inc. \(SRTA\)](#).

Many states are members of multiple clinical testing agencies and a number of states accept results of more than one clinical exam for licensure application.

Please note: [New York](#) does not require a clinical examination, but requires applicants to complete an accredited postgraduate dental education program of at least one year in length (PGY-1). [California](#), [Connecticut](#), and [Minnesota](#) offer licensure applicants the option of completing an accredited postgraduate education program, at least one year in length, in lieu of a clinical examination. [Delaware](#) conducts its own practical clinical examination and requires other post graduate education or practice experience as defined by the Delaware State Board of Dentistry.

Additional Licensure Requirements

Candidates are eligible to apply for a dental license once the educational, written examination and clinical examination requirements are met. In addition, state boards may have additional requirements, such as:

- jurisprudence examination
- proof of malpractice insurance
- BLS or CPR certification
- specialty degree from an ADA accredited program
- specialty examination results or certificate
- background check
- fingerprint verification
- interview
- documentation of hepatitis B vaccination; or
- courses in infection control, radiation safety or other specified topics