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Gail Aamodt  
*Pacific University*

Lisa Rowley  
*Pacific University*

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# Preparing Dental Hygiene Students for Unsupervised Practice

## **Description**

Licensed dentalhygienists in Oregon can apply for a limited access permit (LAP), a credential which allows them to provide dental hygiene services without dentist supervision for patients who have “limitedaccess” to regular dental hygiene treatment.

Requirements for this permit have included a specified number of hours of dentist supervised dental hygiene practice plus 40 hours of continuing education. The dental hygiene curriculum at Pacific University has been specifically designed to prepare students for this form of unsupervised practice. A recent legislative change now allows graduates of this program to apply for a limited access permit immediately upon graduation.

## **Disciplines**

Dentistry

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# Preparing Dental Hygiene Students for Unsupervised Practice

Gail Aamodt, RDH, MS and Lisa J. Rowley, CDA, RDH, MS  
Pacific University, School of Dental Health Science, Hillsboro, Oregon

## Overview

Licensed dental hygienists in Oregon can apply for a limited access permit (LAP), a credential which allows them to provide dental hygiene services without dentist supervision for patients who have "limited access" to regular dental hygiene treatment. Requirements for this permit have included a specified number of hours of dentist supervised dental hygiene practice plus 40 hours of continuing education.

The dental hygiene curriculum at Pacific University has been specifically designed to prepare students for this form of unsupervised practice. A recent legislative change now allows graduates of this program to apply for a limited access permit immediately upon graduation.

## What is an LAP?

Dental hygienists in Oregon who have a limited access permit (LAP) may provide dental hygiene services to "limited access" patients in a variety of settings **without the supervision of a dentist.**

LAP dental hygienists may provide all services within the scope of dental hygiene practice, except those that are specifically not authorized.

LAP dental hygienists need general supervision of a dentist in order to provide local anesthesia & temporary restorations.

LAP dental hygienists need indirect supervision of a dentist in order to administer nitrous oxide.

LAP dental hygienists can treat a wide variety of underserved patients in multiple health care settings.

At least one time each calendar year, LAP dental hygienists must refer each patient to a dentist who is available to treat the patient.

## What is the History of the LAP?

In 1997, Oregon Legislature amended the Oregon Dental Practice Act to create the limited access permit (LAP) for dental hygienists.

In 1998, Oregon Board of Dentistry adopted Administrative Rules for LAP practice.

Original statute required dental hygienists to complete 5,000 hours of dentist supervised practice within previous 5 year period prior to obtaining a limited access permit.

In 2007, Oregon Dental Practice Act was amended to reduce hours of dentist supervised practice required prior to obtaining limited access permit to 2,500 hours with no time constraint.

Other legislative changes have expanded LAP settings & added services which can be provided without dentist supervision.

## Why Start a New Dental Hygiene Program in Oregon?

Oregon Health & Science University's School of Dentistry graduated the last class from their BS Degree Dental Hygiene Program in June 2003.

With closing of OHSU's program, no BS Degree Dental Hygiene Program was offered in the greater Portland area.

Pacific University had developed a Strategic Plan to grow its College of Health Professions (CHP) by adding new dental hygiene & pharmacy education programs & by opening a new Health Professions Campus, all slated to begin August 2006.

All CHP programs at Pacific University focus on preparing students to provide health care services to underserved patients.



## Preparing Dental Hygiene Students for Unsupervised Practice

**Coursework** includes inter-professional competence, dental communication, Spanish language & culture, psychosocial & cultural aspects of dental care, teaching strategies, business management, restorative procedures, dental hygiene fieldwork, current issues & dental capstone.

**Clinic Experience** includes approximately 400 hours of clinical practice completed in an on-campus clinic with patients who are predominantly low-income, Latino adults, who only speak Spanish & who have had no prior dental care.

**Fieldwork Experience** includes approximately 100 hours of clinical practice completed in 15 different off-campus fieldwork settings.

**Fieldwork patients** include pregnant Latino women & their children, prison inmates, Native American teenagers, elementary school children, HIV-positive adults, children with disabilities, migrant farm workers & nursing home residents.

**Fieldwork settings** include a public health clinic, a federal prison, an Indian Health Services clinic, a Boys & Girls Club, an HIV Clinic, a children's hospital, migrant camps & long-term care facilities.

## New LAP Requirements

### Pathway 1 (as amended effective January 1, 2008)

Complete 2,500 hours of dentist supervised dental hygiene practice & complete 40 hours of courses in a CODA accredited & OBD approved formal, post-secondary educational program.

OR

### Pathway 2 (new pathway added effective January 1, 2010)

Complete OBD approved course of study that includes at least 500 hours of dental hygiene practice with limited access patients under direct supervision of faculty of CODA accredited dental or dental hygiene program. Practice hours before & after graduation may be combined to meet this requirement.

**Pathway 2** was developed based on the Pacific's Dental Hygiene Program.

## Why is Pathway 2 significant for Pacific's Dental Hygiene Program?

Graduates of Pacific University's BS Degree Dental Hygiene Program are now eligible to apply for a limited access permit (LAP) immediately upon graduation without completing additional hours of supervised dental hygiene practice or additional hours of coursework.

## How did we do this?

**Curriculum Design:** Developed a dental hygiene program with appropriate course content, on-campus clinic experience & off-campus fieldwork experience to prepare dental hygiene students for unsupervised practice.

**Regulatory Change:** Collaborated with the state board of dentistry, state professional associations & state legislature to promote regulatory changes that would create a second pathway for obtaining a limited access permit (LAP).

## What's next?

Develop affiliation agreements with additional fieldwork sites to provide students with experience treating underserved patients in additional types of settings.

Conduct survey of current LAP dental hygienists to assess outcomes of their practice.

Continue to monitor state regulatory changes & revise dental hygiene curriculum to ensure that students are prepared for these changes.

Encourage students & faculty to become actively involved in the state regulatory process so that they have the skills to pursue change.