Dental Assistant and EFDA delegation rules have been updated!
WAC 246-817-510, 520, 525, 540, and 545
Effective Mach 13, 2017

Specifically, the amended rules:
Delegation definitions changes include (WAC 246-817-510):
• Changing close supervision to be consistent with RCW 18.260.010.
• Changing coronal polishing by moving the dentist’s responsibility for evaluation to prior to dismissing the patient to the list of allowable task as it is a condition of the task not defining the term.
• Changing general supervision to be consistent with RCW 18.260.010.
• Changing luxation by deleting a sentence that refers to what luxation is not. It is unnecessary.
• Changing suturing by deleting a sentence that refers to what suturing is not. It is unnecessary.
• Deleting noncredentialed person as it is not necessary.
• Correcting elevating soft tissue, incising, oral prophylaxis, and volunteer dental assistant wording and grammar.

Dental assistant allowable tasks changes include (WAC 246-817-520):
• Adding placing cavity liners and bases;
• Adding sterilize equipment and disinfect operatories;
• Adding bonding attachments for clear removable orthodontic aligners;
• Adding a dental assistant cannot intra-orally adjust or finish permanent restoration as part of polishing restorations;
• Adding apply bonding agents to perform acid etch;
• Adding remove orthodontic cement and orthodontic bonded resin material to fixed orthodontic appliances;
• Detailing specific types of impressions and added digital scans;
• Clarifying that starting and stopping the flow of nitrous oxide as part of assist in administration of inhalation minimal sedation (nitrous oxide);
• Clarifying select and fit orthodontic bands;
• Clarifying a dentist shall determine teeth are free of calculus before dismissing the patient after a dental assistant performs coronal polish;
• Rewording place, expose, and process radiographs;
• Rewording placing a matrix and wedge for a direct restoration after a dentist has prepared the teeth;
• Rewording fabricate, cement, and remove temporary crowns or temporary bridges;
• Rewording prepare teeth for the bonding of orthodontic appliances;
• Rewording give patient education in oral hygiene;
• Adding language to require a dentist to ensure the dental assistant has demonstrated the skills necessary to perform each task competently, specifically to address use of high speed versus slow speed hand pieces; and
• Deleting taking health histories.

Dental assistant prohibited tasks changes include (WAC 246-817-540):
• Rewording intra-orally adjust and finish permanent restorations; and
• Deleting semi-permanent from placing of permanent restorations in natural teeth.

Expanded function dental auxiliary (EFDA) allowable tasks changes include (WAC 246-817-525):
• Deleting all dental assistant tasks and referred to dental assistant rule;
• Rewording place, carve, finish, and polish direct restorations;
• Rewording place, expose, and process radiographs; and
• Adding language to require a dentist to ensure the EFDA has demonstrated the skills necessary to perform each task competently.

Expanded function dental auxiliary prohibited tasks changes include (WAC 246-817-545):
• Rewording intra-orally adjust and finish permanent inlays, crowns, and bridges; and
• Correcting reference to WAC 246-817-520 (4) (e).

Why were rules amended?
The Dental Quality Assurance Commission (commission) rule amendments update the scope of practice (listing of allowable and prohibited tasks that may and may not be performed) for registered dental assistants and licensed expanded function dental auxiliaries (EFDAs). The scope of practice (list of allowable and prohibited tasks) has been an area of confusion for licensed dentists, registered dental assistants, and licensed EFDAs.

A dental assistant may only provide supportive services under close supervision of a dentist.  
"Close supervision" means that a supervising dentist whose patient is being treated has personally diagnosed the condition to be treated and has personally authorized the procedures to be performed. The supervising dentist is continuously on-site and physically present in the treatment facility while the procedures are performed by the assistive personnel and capable of responding immediately in the event of an emergency. The term does not require a supervising dentist to be physically present in the operatory.
An EFDA may provide identified supportive services under either close or general supervision of a dentist.

Access dentistry laws here.

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