

CDHA Celebrates Passage of SB853 (Perata), our Legislation for Self-Regulation!

Imagine an autonomous dental hygiene profession without oversight by the Dental Board of California. SB853 makes the autonomous Dental Hygiene Committee of California a reality that becomes effective July 1, 2009.

SB853 establishes the Dental Hygiene Committee of California (DHCC) under the Department of Consumer Affairs. This bill abolishes the Committee on Dental Auxiliaries (COMDA) transferring its authority to regulate the practice of dental assisting to the Dental Board of California (DBC), and creates a standing advisory committee for dental assisting. The bill establishes within the DBC a full-time management-level staff position to manage matters related to dental assisting. The Dental Assistant Committee will be a three-member subcommittee of the Dental Board of California beginning July 1, 2009. Between January and June 2009 administrative authority for managing matters related to dental hygienists will seamlessly transition from COMDA to the new DHCC.

The Dental Board of California (DBC) sunsets and becomes the Dental Bureau of California on July 1, 2008. On January 1, 2009, the Dental Bureau of California will revert back to the Dental Board of California.

SB853 creates, within the jurisdiction of the board, the nine-member Dental Hygiene Committee of California, which will have specified memberships and duties. The semantics can be confusing, but the executive officer of the DHCC will actually report to the director of the Department of Consumer Affairs, not the executive officer of the dental board.

Among other things, this bill establishes criteria for licensure of a registered dental hygienist, a registered dental hygienist in alternative practice, or a registered dental hygienist in extended functions by the DHCC. This bill sets forth the committee's functions and duties, including issuing, reviewing, and revoking licenses as well as developing and administering examinations. Additional committee functions include adopting regulations, determining fees and education programs and continuing education requirements for a registered dental hygienist, a registered dental hygienist in alternative practice, and a registered dental hygienist in extended functions. The bill requires the Dental Hygiene Committee of California to establish a diversion program for licensees whose competency may be impaired due to drug or alcohol abuse, and to establish diversion evaluation committees, with specified duties in that regard.

We owe a great deal of gratitude to the many years of efforts by so many who made this achievement possible, especially JoAnn Galliano, RDH, MEd and Terry McHale, our lobbyist at Aaron Read and Associates. Michael Miiller of Senator Don Perata's office and representatives of the California Dental Association are to be commended for their assistance and collaboration. Now we begin a new era of implementing the charge of this legislation – to better serve the consumers of California!

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