

# Fact Sheet: Minnesota's Dental Assistant Workforce 2008-2009



The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), in cooperation with the Minnesota Board of Dentistry, collects information on supply, education, career and future plans of dental assistants. Minnesota dental assistants complete workforce surveys during a biennial licensing renewal process. All data presented are based on information collected from dental assistants renewing licenses from 2008 to 2009, unless noted otherwise. **Contact MDH with questions or data requests about dental assistants or other Minnesota health care professionals at 651-201-3838, or visit MDH at: [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/orhpc/workforce](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/orhpc/workforce).**

## Overall

- According to the Minnesota Board of Dentistry, 7,146 dental assistants renewed their Minnesota licenses between 2008 and 2009, and 6,288 or 88 percent reported practicing in Minnesota. The remaining 858 dental assistants were keeping their licenses active, but not practicing or they were practicing outside of Minnesota.
- MDH received a total of 3,954 survey responses, representing an overall response rate of 55 percent.
- Given the number of dental assistants the Minnesota Board of Dentistry reported as active and practicing in Minnesota, there were approximately 119 dental assistants per 100,000 population between 2008 and 2009.
- Dental assistants in Minnesota outpaced the national wage and salary earnings with an average hourly wage of \$19.96 and annual average salary of \$41,510 in 2009. The national average hourly wage for dental assistants in 2009 was \$16.35 and annual average salary was \$34,000 according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

## Training and Education

- Among licensed dental assistants, 98 percent received their training in Minnesota while only 2 percent received dental training out of the state.
- A certificate in dental assisting was the most frequent form of post-secondary education survey respondents received (75 percent), followed by an associate's degree (21 percent). Three percent listed a bachelor's degree as their post-secondary education.
- Seventy-three percent of the dental assistant workforce received their first license in 1990 or later.
- Among dental assistants who identified themselves as students, most were enrolled in a dental hygiene program (56 percent).

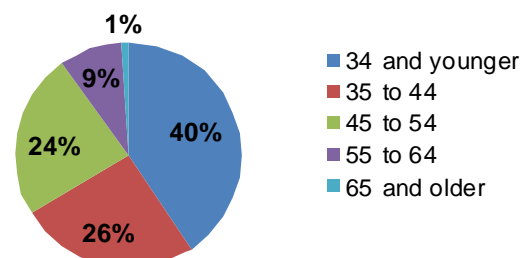
## Sex, Race and Ethnicity

- Licensed dental assistants were predominately female (99 percent).
- Most dental assistants identified their race as White (96 percent).
- Only 4 percent of dental assistants identified themselves as African American, Native American, Asian or multiracial. Two percent identified their ethnicity as Hispanic.
- Asians were the largest non-white racial group to be licensed as dental assistants (2 percent).

## Age Range

- Based on licensing data, 40 percent of all dental assistants were less than 35 years old and half were 35 to 54 years old (Graph A).
- Median age was 38 for dental assistants.
  - The median age in urban and large rural areas was 38.
  - The median age in small or isolated rural areas was 39.

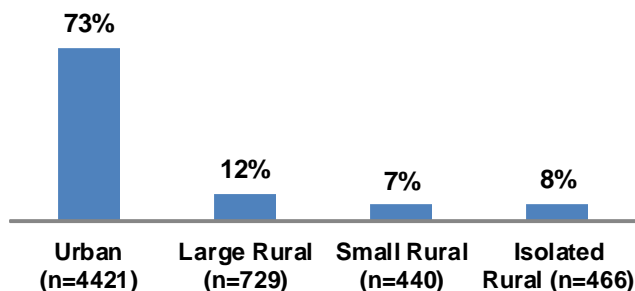
**Graph A**  
**Practicing Dental Assistants by Age Group, Minnesota 2008-2009**



## Geographic Distribution

- Based on mailing addresses, almost three-fourths of dental assistants in Minnesota were concentrated in the urban areas of the state (Graph B).
- The largest concentration of dental assistants was in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan statistical area (69 percent).

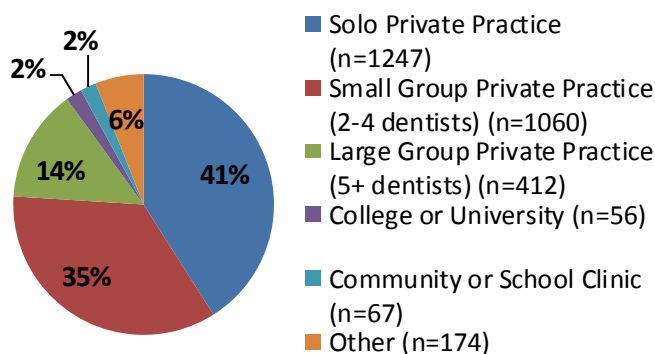
**Graph B**  
Distribution of Dental Assistants by Rural-Urban Commuting Areas, Minnesota 2008-2009



## Primary Practice Setting

- Solo private practices remain the most common type of practice setting (41 percent) for dental assistants followed by small group practices of 2-4 dentists (35 percent). Only 14 percent reported working in a large group private practice (5+ dentists) (Graph C).
- Dental assistants worked an average of 10 years at their primary worksite or facility.
- On average, dental assistants worked 32 hours per week at their primary worksite or facility.
- Only 5 percent of dental assistants worked at more than one location.

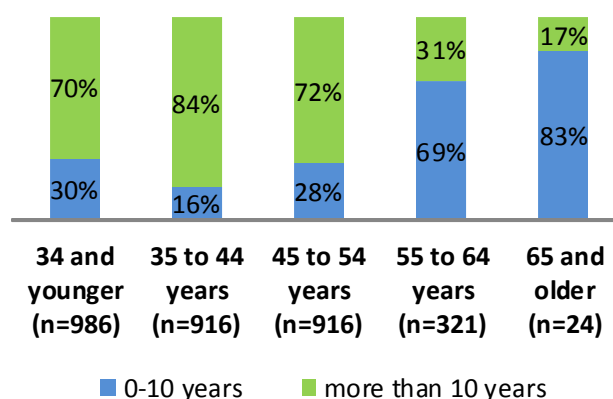
**Graph C**  
Dental Assistants by Type of Practice Setting, Minnesota 2008-2009



## Practice Longevity Plans

- Most dental assistants (70 percent) planned to practice longer than 10 years, while 20 percent planned to stop within six to 10 years.
- Ten percent of dental assistants said they planned to stop practicing within the next five years.
- Dental assistants 34 years and younger were more likely to have said they plan to leave the profession within the next 10 years (30 percent) compared to dental assistants who were 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 years (16 percent and 28 percent) (Graph D).

**Graph D**  
Dental Assistants Future Practice Plans by Age Group, Minnesota 2008-2009



## Expanded Restorative Functions

- Approximately 12 percent of dental assistants who completed the survey said they performed some type of expanded restorative function permitted under Minnesota statutes §150A.10 Subd. 4, while 66 percent said they did not (Graph E).
- Thirty-two percent of dental assistants performed just one of the four possible restorative activities permitted under the Minnesota statutes.
- Among dental assistants who performed at least one restorative function, the most common procedure was adapting and cementing stainless steel crowns (54 percent).

**Graph E**  
Dental Assistants who Performed Restorative Functions, Minnesota 2008-2009

