

## Frequently Asked Questions Every Practice Should Know about the new Dental Hygiene Rules for General Supervision under HB 154

On January 1, 2018, Georgia licensed dentists will have the option to authorize Georgia licensed dental hygienists they employ and supervise to provide specific dental hygiene duties under general supervision. To help prepare your office for the new rules that will take effect in the New Year the GDHA Action Committee have provided a list of frequently asked questions.

**1. Q: How is General Supervision defined in the new law?**

**A:** “General supervision means that a licensed dentist has authorized the delegable duties of a licensed dental hygienist but does not require that a licensed dentist be present when such duties are performed.”

**2. Q: In what settings will General Supervision be permitted?**

**A:** Private Dental Offices and Safety Net Settings.

**Safety Net settings defined in the bill are:**

- Title I schools
- Schools in which at least 65% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunches
- Head Start programs
- Georgia’s Pre-K Program
- Hospitals
- Nursing homes
- Long-term care facilities
- Rural health clinics
- Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC’s)
- Health facilities operated by federal, state, county, or local governments
- Hospices
- Family violence shelters
- Free health clinics

**3. Q: What functions may be provided under general supervision in Private dental offices?**

**A:** Oral Prophylaxis and Assessment, Application of Sealants, Fluoride Treatment, Oral Hygiene Instruction and Education and Exposure and Processing of Radiographs (if the radiographs are provided for by specific standing orders of the authorizing licensed dentist).

**4. Q: Can a dental hygienist provide scaling in presence of generalized moderate or severe gingival inflammation (CDT Code 4346), Periodontal Maintenance (CDT Code 4910), or scaling and root planning (CDT code 4341 or 4342) under general supervision?**

**A: No.** A dental hygienist working under general supervision in private practice and or safety-net settings may only provide an adult or child oral prophylaxis (CDT Code 1110 and 1120) as authorized by their supervising dentist.

**5. Q: What functions may be provided under general supervision in Safety Net settings?**

**A:** Oral prophylaxis, application of topical fluoride and sealants.

**6. Q: Are there any requirements that must be met by the supervising dentist before general supervision may be authorized in private practice?**

**A: Yes. Requirements include:**

- The authorizing dentist must clinically examine a new patient during the Initial visit so that they may become a patient of record. A patient must be examined by the authorizing licensed dentist at a minimum of 12 month intervals.
- A patient must be notified in advance of the appointment that he or she will be treated by the licensed dental hygienist under general supervision without the authorizing licensed dentist being present or be examined by the authorizing licensed dentist during that appointment.
- A licensed dentist may only authorize up to four (4) licensed dental hygienists to provide dental hygiene services under general supervision.

**7. Q: Does the dentist have to examine the patient before the dental hygienist sees the new patient?**

**A. No.** The law does not state whether or not the doctor examines the patient before or after the dental hygienist sees the new patient, only that the dentist provides an examination during the initial visit so that the patient may become established as a patient of record.

**8. Q: Does advance notification to the patient need to be done in writing or by phone?**

**A:** The law does not state what mode of communication must be used to provide advanced notification to the patient. GDHA recommends that if verbal communication is used that a notation should be made in the patient file stating that the patient verbally acknowledged and agreed to be seen without the dentist physically present.

**9. Q: Are there any requirements that must be met by the dental hygienist before they may work under general supervision?**

**A: Yes.** In both private practice dental offices and safety net settings licensed dental hygienists working under general supervision must have:

- At least 2 years of experience in the practice of dental hygiene
- Shall be in compliance with CE and CPR requirements
- Shall be licensed and in good standing with the Georgia Board of Dentistry
- Shall maintain professional liability insurance in accordance with Board of Dentistry rules and regulations.

**10. Q: Are all dental hygienists in Georgia required to have professional liability insurance regardless of whether or not they work under general supervision?**

**A:** HB 154 states that dental hygienists working under general supervision shall maintain professional liability insurance. GDHA recommends that all dental hygienists in Georgia carry their own professional liability insurance. Professional liability insurance protects one's license and is very reasonably priced (typically less than \$100 annually). This insurance may be purchased through Proliability at the following link:

<http://www.proliability.com/professional-liability-insurance/dental-hygienists-assistants>

**11. Q: Are there other requirements for the dental hygienists working under general supervision in safety net settings?**

**A: Yes.** Dental hygienists working under general supervision in safety net settings shall provide:

- The name and license number of the dental hygienist and authorizing dentist.
- Any dental hygiene issues that the dental hygienist identified during treatment.
- A statement advising each patient to seek a more thorough clinical examination by a Georgia licensed dentist within ninety (90) days, unless the authorizing, dentist performed an initial clinical exam.

**12. Q: What if the patient shows up for dental hygiene services under general supervision in safety net settings and they have dental pain or clearly visible evidence of widespread dental disease. Can the dental hygienist still see them for care?**

**A: No.** Patients presenting with pain or clearly visible evidence of widespread dental disease:

- **Must be immediately referred to the authorizing Georgia licensed dentist for a clinical examination and treatment.**
- These patients are ineligible to receive dental hygiene services and **must** be provided written notice to inform them that they are unable to receive dental hygiene care under general supervision until they receive a clinical examination by a Georgia licensed dentist.
- These patients must receive written authorization from the examining dentist allowing them to receive dental hygiene services under general supervision before they can be seen without a dentist physically present in the treatment facility.
- The hygienist shall notate the patient's file that the patient shall not be seen under general supervision until the patient receives written authorization from the authorizing dentist.

**13. Q: Are there requirements that the authorizing dentist must have in order for his dental hygienist to work under general supervision in safety net settings?**

**A: Yes.** Authorizing, Georgia licensed dentists shall practice dentistry and treat patients in a physical and operational dental office located in Georgia within fifty (50) miles of the setting in which dental hygienists are providing dental hygiene services under general supervision. A licensed dentist may only authorize up to four (4) licensed dental hygienists to provide dental hygiene services under general supervision.

**14. Q: Can dental hygienists work out of a mobile dental van under general supervision?**

**A: No.** Dental hygiene services *may not* be provided by dental hygienists working in a mobile dental van without a supervising dentist present.

**15. Q: What is the difference between a mobile dental van and how portable dental equipment is transported?**

**A:** Dental equipment in a mobile dental van is “fixed”, meaning the patient must come into the van for treatment. Portable dental equipment is transported brought into a facility. Portable dental equipment may be used in any of the safety net settings defined in HB 154.

**16. Q: How many dental hygienists can a supervising dentist supervise under general supervision?**

**A:** Lines 168- 170 of HB 154 state: (3) A licensed dentist may only authorize up to four licensed dental hygienists to provide dental hygiene services **pursuant to subsection (g), (h), or (i) of this Code section at any one time.** MEANING in accordance with how the law is written in subsection:

(g): line 88 of the law is GENERAL SUPERVISION IN A PRIVATE PRACTICE SETTING

(h): line 106 of the law is GENERAL SUPERVISION IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

(i): line 119-122 of the law is GENERAL SUPERVISION IS IN hospitals, nursing homes, long-term care facilities, rural health clinics, federally qualified health centers, health facilities operated by federal, state, county, or local governments, hospices, family violence shelters as defined in Code Section 19-13-20, and free health clinics as defined in Code Section 51-1-29.4

HB 154 only identifies the number of hygienists that may be supervised under GENERAL SUPERVISION at any given time.

We hope that this FAQ page has helped answer any questions that you may have about the upcoming changes in the dental hygiene supervision under HB 154.. Your professional association and the GDHA Action Committee are committed to providing to most up to date information impacting the profession of dental hygiene in Georgia.

**Disclaimer:**

The information contained on the GDHA FAQ Page is for general reference purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. GDHA recommends that legal advice, including advice pertaining to the information contained on this page be obtained by qualified legal counsel.

HB 154 as written and signed into law by Governor Deal on May 8, 2017 may be found at:  
<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20172018/170636.pdf>

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