

# Board Certification in Primary Care Dentistry: Advancing & Empowering the Workforce that Treats the Underserved

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## Issues

- Primary care dentistry provides comprehensive oral health services emphasizing preventive care, early detection, and treatment of dental diseases within community settings across the lifespan.
- Similar to family medicine, it manages patients with diverse needs and serves as the cornerstone of community oral health.
- Despite its critical role, the definition and responsibilities of primary care dentists are loosely defined, and there are no standardized certification programs.
- Board certification is crucial in primary care dentistry, where practitioners often serve as the first line of defense against a wide range of dental and systemic health issues.
- The benefits include providing a structured pathway for demonstrating expertise, validating clinical competencies, fostering continuous professional development, enhancing public trust, improving care quality, and encouraging lifelong learning.

## Objectives

- Highlight the importance and benefits of establishing a board certification program in primary care dentistry and provides pathways to achieve certification.
- Propose pathways allow that for board certification in primary care dentistry, enabling broader participation and addressing the varied backgrounds of dental professionals
- Provide national suggestion to dental associations

## Position

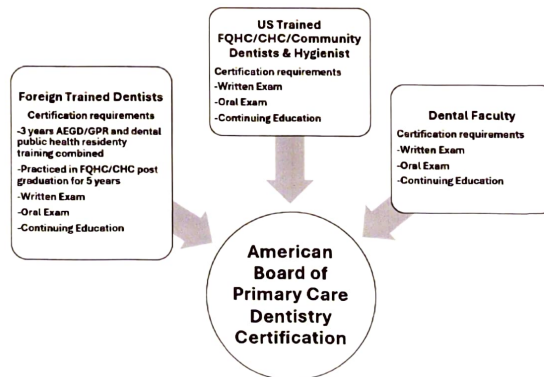
### Importance

Board certification is particularly important in primary care dentistry, where practitioners often serve as the first line of defense against a wide range of dental and systemic health issues.

### Benefits

- The provision of a structured pathway for dentists and dental hygienists to demonstrate their expertise and commitment to the field
- Validating clinical competencies
- Hospital/Medical Center credentialing
- Fostering continuous professional development
- Fostering public trust in dental professionals
- Enhancing the quality of care and ultimately improving patient outcomes
- Encouraging lifelong learning and excellence within the profession

**Figure 1: Pathways to potential board certification in Primary Care Dentistry**



- US Trained Dentists: Eligibility after 2 years of working or residency.
- Foreign Trained Dentists: Entry through combined primary care dentistry residency programs or service to FQHCs/CHCs/government
- A national dental association should adopt a primary care dentistry board to align with medicine, increase standardization, and increase public safety.

## Conclusion

The expected outcomes from the establishment of a primary care board certification program include the following:

- Standardized certification process for primary care dentistry
- Increased competency and confidence among certified dentists and dental hygienists
- Improved patient care quality and satisfaction
- Enhanced access to high-quality dental care for underserved populations
- Increased access to hospital systems (operating rooms and other credentialed facilities)
- Increased compliance with health care accreditation agencies (Joint Commission, AAAHC, and NCAQ)

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