

# **2010 PROPOSED SALARY GUIDE FOR DENTAL ASSISTANTS**

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Saskatchewan Dental Assistants' Association



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## SALARY ACCORDING TO YEARS OF EXPERIENCE (DOLLARS PER HOUR)

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	START	6 MO	1 YR	1.5 YR	2 YRS	3 YRS	4 YRS
DENTAL ASSISTANT	16.40	17.06	18.63	18.94	19.29	19.61	20.12
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	5 YRS	6 YRS	7 YRS	8 YRS	9 YRS	10 - 15 YRS	15 YRS +
DENTAL ASSISTANT	20.16	21.17	21.66	22.13	22.74	23.34 – 27.06	27.87*

**KEY: Dental Assistant** means trained dental assistant holding provincial registration & current licensure.

**START** means no previous work experience in a dental office, generally a new graduate.

**Years of Experience** means actual “years of practice”; not time with current employer

\* EMPLOYEES BEYOND 15 YEARS SHOULD RECEIVE THE NEGOTIATED INCREASE OF 3% PLUS AN APPROPRIATE MERIT INCREASE FOR EACH ADDITIONAL YEAR OF SERVICE.

- Note that the Consumer Price Index for Saskatchewan stands at 2.1% (June, 2009)
- Note that the core inflation index for Canada stands at .26% (June, 2009)
- Our guide addresses dollar compensation only

### CALCULATION TO DETERMINE MONTHLY SALARY:

“Start” Hourly Rate × Hours in a week × 52 = Yearly Salary ÷ 12 = Monthly Salary

\$16.40 x 35 x 52 = 29,848 per year ÷ 12 = 2,487.33 per month

\$16.40 x 37.5 x 52 = 31,980 per year ÷ 12 = 2,665.00 per month

\$16.40 x 40 x 52 = 34,112 per year ÷ 12 = 2,842.67 per month

### COMPARATIVE SALARIES: Full time training related average starting monthly salary (SIAST 2007)

(“Average” starting hourly wage reported within first 6 months of employment)

Dental Assistant - \$2,392 [Range of \$1,600 to \$3,240; Median \$2,400]

Combined Lab & X-Ray Technician - \$3,107 [Range of \$2,400 to \$3,900; Median \$3,000]

Practical Nurse - \$3,687 [Range of \$3,150 to \$4,050; Median \$3,750]

Dental Hygienist - \$4,900 [Range of \$4,200 to \$6,500; Median \$4,800]

**The Salary Schedule:** The guide is designed to provide a range of salaries appropriate to different experiences of dental assistants. It is suggested that salary recognize educational training, experience and status rather than specific to a job description.

This guide suggests an hourly wage along with a formula to assist in calculating a monthly salary dependent on “base pay”, hours worked per day, and days worked per month.

The first column indicates an initial salary level that is recommended for an individual, presumably a new graduate; who has never had any experience in the duties of a licenced dental assistant. Years of experience are identified after the “start” cell in the table. It is presumed that dental assistants with experience would start a new position at the step appropriate to their years of experience in dentistry. Acknowledging

experience and merit is an important part of managing a successful practice.

The Salary Guide for dental assistants now extends to 15+ years. After 15 years of experience there are so many variables, it is often difficult for veteran assistants to negotiate an appropriate rate. A dental assistant with 15+ years experience is considered an expert in their field. We trust employers will reimburse these valuable employees at a fair market value commensurate with their expertise. This value could be as much as an additional 4% annually (note: merit is calculated into the steps start to 15 years). We assert that all dental employees should receive an annual merit and cost of living increase reflective of their abilities, which truly recognizes their years of employment.

Those individuals completing additional postgraduate training have also expanded their roles in the dental

office and should be reimbursed accordingly. For example, our (SDAA) salary survey data (July, 2009) indicates that the average orthodontic assistant receives remuneration at a rate 18% higher than the average chairside assistant. We presume that this gap has narrowed to some extent as the labour market shortages have increased chairside assistant rates substantively.

**Cost of Living Factors:** Increased food and shelter costs are cited as being the main factors in pushing the cost of living upwards in Saskatchewan for 2009. The 3.0% recommended salary increase will provide some relief in relation to these significant increases.

**In General:** Salaries are one of the workplace stressors in all sectors of the labour force. Dentistry is no exception, although for the most part, both employers and employees seem to be able to reach amiable agreements. We are hopeful this will continue to be the situation, and that the "Proposed Salary Guide" can provide some framework for the process. Why are negotiations important? A high staff turnover rate will create a lack of profitability within any office. In many instances dental assistants have preferred to resign from a position when higher salaried employment became available, rather than enter negotiations with the employer-dentist.

Both dentists and dental assistants should recognize that the salary guide is provided to assist your office in arriving at a reasonable and equitable salary structure. Dentists must recognize that the guide is based on the principle of establishing a salary level sufficient to attract and maintain high quality oral health professionals. Practice profitability and salaries of other dental personnel all have a bearing on an appropriate salary. Employers who value professional, committed staff must offer salaries to entice and retain these individuals.

A recent survey conducted by the Canadian Dental Assistants Association that most general practice dental assistants in Saskatchewan are receiving an average salary of \$20.36 whereby Alberta dental assistants are averaging \$25.53. Speciality assistants in Saskatchewan averaged a wage of \$20.70 in comparison to a \$27.52 average for Alberta. The national average revealed a salary of \$20.98 for general practice and \$22.47 for specialties.

Labour Standards and Occupational Health and Safety govern the Saskatchewan workplace. Employers and employees should be familiar with their policies. The writers presume that the dental assistant will be working in a pleasant and congenial atmosphere.

## **PERSONNEL POLICIES:**

1. The Dental Assistant must hold a valid license and must practice in accordance with the Dental Disciplines Act, Regulatory Bylaws and the General Competency document.
2. Only licensed individuals are eligible to perform intra oral procedures.
3. Employers must not ask allied personnel to practice outside of their scope of practice as defined in The Dental Disciplines Act (2002).
4. For a mutually beneficial working environment dental assistants want to be treated with courtesy, respect and appreciation.
5. A written 'Agreement for Employment' stating hours, wages, benefits, holidays and job expectations should be drafted. Employer and employee should mutually develop the document and both should have a copy of the agreement. CDAA members can download a sample Employment Guide & Agreement from the CDAA website. [www.cdAA.ca](http://www.cdAA.ca)
6. A performance appraisal would be beneficial to both parties on a yearly basis following the initial probation.
7. The methodology of airing grievances should be established for both employer and employee prior to employment.
8. The office uniform and dress code must be fully understood prior to employment.

## **BENEFIT OPTIONS FOR PERSONNEL:**

1. A sick leave policy should be established that is reasonable to both parties.
2. Employees required to conform to a uniform code could be provided with a minimum of two uniforms per year.
3. The employer could absorb professional fees, time loss, and registration fees for mutually beneficial continuing education.
4. Job sharing opportunities could be made available to dental assistants. Part-time employees should receive benefits at a pro-rated amount. Employers hiring part-time or hourly paid employees should make benefit policies clearly understood at the time of employment.

5. Personal days should be available to all employees.
6. The employer may wish to provide the employee with benefits through some type of insurance coverage. Insurance premiums could be covered completely as an office expense or the employer and employee may wish to agree on a fifty - fifty or some other type of arrangement. [www.cdaabenefits.ca](http://www.cdaabenefits.ca)
7. Employers who would like to see the current employee plans supplemented offer group Registered Retirement Savings Plans. Their intention is to increase the retirement benefit and provide for the possibility for early retirement. The role of the employer may be limited to providing the payroll deduction framework within which the plan operates, or to promote enrollment in the plan by absorbing plan expenses for the RRSP.
8. Employers should inform their employees of the vaccinations recommended for their profession and arrange, with the employee's consent, for the vaccinations to be completed during their normal work time and reimbursement for the associated costs.

## **Questions About Labour Related Issues?**

Labour Standards Offices are located in eight centres throughout the province. If you need information or assistance, please use the blue government pages in your phone book. Website: [labour.gov.sk.ca](http://labour.gov.sk.ca)

## **Since You Asked...**

- Overtime (time and one-half) must be paid to dental assistants who work more than 8 hours in a day or 40 hours in a week. Dental offices are eligible to apply for an Averaging Permit, which allows employee's hours of work to be averaged over a longer period of time.
- It is the responsibility of the dentist/employer to provide effective personal protective equipment, in accordance with universal precautions at no cost to the dental assistant.
- If you have a latex allergy your employer must provide non-latex gloves, offer alternative work duties that do not involve contact with latex products, or develop a latex safe work environment.
- All employees (including part-time) are entitled to regular wages for ten public holidays a year. (New Years Day, Family Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Saskatchewan Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day and Christmas Day.) [Check with Labour Standards regarding payment formula]
- All employees are entitled to a harassment free work environment. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code and The Occupational Health and Safety Act prohibit harassment in the work place. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect.
- In case of a needlestick injury; allow bleeding from the wound to reduce contact with blood or body fluid. Wash area with soap and water. Swab wound with antiseptic. Immediately call Public Health Services.
- A currently licensed Saskatchewan Dental Assistant can only perform skills that are listed with the SDAA.
- A currently licensed Saskatchewan Dental Assistant is not required to hold their NDAEB certificate as long as they annually maintain their license in Saskatchewan. All new registrants must hold their NDAEB certificate.
- A currently licensed Saskatchewan Dental Assistant may need to hold a practising licence if they intend to become licensed in another province.
- While skill lists have expanded over the years, all dental assistants need formal recognition (certificate) in order to perform fairly routine skills such as place treatment liner materials; fabricate, cement and remove temporary crowns; place pit and fissure sealants; apply topical anaesthetic; remove sutures; and polish amalgams.
- Dental Assistants in Saskatchewan holding FULL PRACTISING LICENSURE can practice without supervision provided that the dentist has authorized the treatment, the dental assistant has been formerly trained to provide the service and the skill is listed on the dental assistant's personal skill list. Please note that every dentist/employer has the authority to stipulate that a dentist must be on site during the provision of allied services.