



South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation



Board of Dentistry

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The South Carolina Dental Board (“Board”) has received numerous requests for guidelines for the reopening of dental offices. The Board is unable to provide guidelines to practitioners seeking to restore normal business operations. The Board recommends that practitioners review information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Dental Association and other resources identified below for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As noted by the Board on March 31, 2020, the Dental Board’s powers are limited by statute to the licensing and discipline of licensees in the dental profession. Accordingly, the Board has not mandated the opening or closing of dental offices nor the postponement of elective or non-urgent dental procedures.

Dentists that are considering reopening should exercise professional judgment and carefully consider the availability of appropriate PPE to minimize risk of virus transmission. Licensees should use their best clinical judgment to properly protect their staff, their patients, and themselves. Dentists should also ensure they have the appropriate equipment, staffing, and protocols in place before returning to non-urgent and non-emergent dental care. Practitioners are responsible for the safety of their patients and staff and must operate in a manner consistent with protecting their safety. Dentists with specific questions regarding liability should consult their legal counsel and insurance providers.

The Board has received a number of comments expressing concern about performing non-urgent and non-emergent care in light of the CDC’s *Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Dental Settings During the COVID-19 Response*, and the CDC’s continuing recommendation that only urgent and emergent services be performed.

The CDC’s COVID-19 recommendations are based on the best available evidence at the time of publication. However, to the extent the CDC makes recommendations as to the nature and type of procedures that dentists in South Carolina should perform, those recommendations are not mandatory and do not carry the force of law. They are advisory only.

The Board is cognizant of South Carolina Regulation 39–10, “Sanitary Standards,” which states that all practices shall conform to and comply with the current recommendations and guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention relating to infection control practices. This Regulation is an adoption of the *Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings 2003*, and its subsequent

recommendations or guidelines for employing infection-reducing practices in a dental setting. It is not an adoption of practice limitations that the CDC recommends.

Guidelines regarding infection control practices in the dental health care setting as mandated by S.C. Reg. 39-19 remain in effect and will be enforced by the Dental Board. Additionally, any new guidelines from the CDC that are promulgated aimed at infection control practices and address sanitation standards employed by dentists must be followed. The failure to do so will constitute a violation of S.C. Reg. 39-10.

While it is not mandatory per the state board, it is highly advisable to heed the CDC's COVID-19 guidance in making an informed decision as to whether you resume non-emergent and non-urgent care. Dentists are strongly encouraged to monitor the Center for Disease Control's website daily for updates.

The Board's statement should not be construed as a commentary on the CDC's advice, but is only to clarify that it is not a violation of S.C. Reg. 39-10 to perform non-emergent/non-urgent procedures despite the CDC's *Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Dental Settings During the COVID-19 Response*. It is a violation of Reg. 39-10 to perform any care while not using CDC infection control guidelines designed to prevent or minimize infection transmission.

Resources:

COVID-19 continues to be a rapidly evolving situation and practitioners should continue to consult daily with all available resources for guidance, including the following:

CDC Information for Healthcare Professionals about Coronavirus (COVID-19)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/index.html>

CDC Recommendations from the Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings, 2003

<https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/guidelines/index.htm>

CDC Interim Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Dental Settings During the COVID-19 Response

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/dental-settings.html>

CDC Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Healthcare Settings

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Finfection-control%2Fcontrol-recommendations.html

National Network for Oral Health Access

<http://www.nnoha.org/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-coronavirus-resources/>

ADA Coronavirus Center for Dentists

https://success.ada.org/en/practice-management/patients/infectious-diseases-2019-novel-coronavirus?utm_source=adaorg&utm_medium=globalheader&utm_content=coronavirus&utm_campaign=covid-19

The American Dental Association (ADA) Advisory Task Force for Dental Practice Recovery has developed the *Return to Work Interim Guidance Toolkit*, a complimentary resource that recommends measures to take to help protect patients, staff, and dentists from COVID-19 as dental practices reopen and begin to provide more than emergency and urgent care.

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

<https://www.scdhec.gov/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

South Carolina Dental Association

<https://www.scda.org/>

South Carolina Board of Dentistry

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation is working closely with state officials regarding the recent travel restrictions and state closures. At this time, the public is restricted from entering the LLR Kingstree Building. However, the board staff is working remotely and will assist you as quickly as they can. Licensees and other members of the public needing assistance are encouraged to visit the Board website at www.llr.sc.gov or contact the Board office at contact.dentistry@llr.sc.gov.

The Board will continue to monitor the situation and will communicate updates via email and Board website. Over the next few weeks, the Board encourages both the public and licensees to remain calm and take appropriate action to decrease the transmission of COVID-19.