



Dental Hygiene Program

Essential Skills for the Tulsa Community College Dental Hygiene Program

The following essential skills address the motor skills, sensory/observation, communication, cognitive, behavioral/emotional, and professional conduct essential to the dental hygiene program at Tulsa Community College. Students must meet these essential skills in order to be admitted and/or retained in the dental hygiene program. Students with disabilities who wish to request reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act must follow the college's procedure for requesting accommodations. While this process can be started at any time, reasonable accommodations may not be implemented retroactively; therefore, being timely in requesting reasonable accommodations is very important. To learn more about the process for establishing reasonable accommodations please contact the TCC Metro Campus Education Access Center (EAC) at eac@tulsacc.edu or call (918) 595-7115 (Voice). Deaf and hard of hearing students may text (918) 809-1864.

The essential skills necessary to acquire or demonstrate competence in a discipline as complex as dental hygiene and needed for successful admission and continuance by candidates for the AAS degree in Dental Hygiene at Tulsa Community College include, but are not limited to, the following abilities:

A. MOTOR SKILLS

1. Gross and fine motor skills sufficient to provide safe and effective standard of care in a small environment such as the oral cavity
2. Physical strength to safely assist in moving a patient with an assistive aid and/or wheelchair to and from the dental chair
3. Possession of adequate sensory perception in hands and fingers in order to explore, detect and remove hard and soft tooth deposits
4. Full manual dexterity including the functioning of both arms, both wrists, both hands, and all fingers with the exception of the pinky fingers
5. Tactile ability sufficient for the use of small instruments with control sufficient for safe instrumentation
6. Ability to manipulate clinical and laboratory instruments and syringes with sufficient fine motor control to operate in a safe manner to avoid patient injury
7. Ability to manipulate clinical and laboratory equipment with sufficient fine motor control to operate in a safe manner
8. Ability to stand, walk, bend, execute range of motion of extremities to move from room-to-room and maneuver in small spaces
9. Ability to perform basic life support, including CPR, and function in an emergency situation

B. SENSORY/OBSERVATION

1. Normal or corrected visual acuity sufficient for observation of oral conditions and for patient observation and assessment
2. High level of hand-eye coordination necessary for extremely fine motor control
3. Visually differentiate the color spectrum for tissue conditions, changes, and signs of disease
4. Discern subtle changes in radiographic density
5. Clearly see the patient's oral cavity from a 20-inch distance from all directions
6. Observe nonverbal communications when performing dental hygiene assessment, intervention, instrumentation, or administering local anesthesia or nitrous oxide sedation
7. Correctable hearing in at least one ear and ability to develop reasonable skills of percussion and auscultation
8. Sufficient olfactory senses for maintaining environment and patient safety

C. COMMUNICATION

1. Effective professional interaction with others in oral and written English
2. Accurately transfer gathered data into a paper and/or electronic patient record
3. Read and understand technical and professional materials
4. Demonstrate sensitivity, confidentiality and respect when speaking with other students, faculty, staff, patients, family, and other professionals
5. Express ideas and feelings clearly
6. Demonstrate a willingness and ability to give and receive feedback maturely
7. Communicate in a manner to develop rapport with patients

D. COGNITIVE

1. Comprehend, reason, integrate, analyze, evaluate and problem solve
2. Demonstrate critical thinking skills in the classroom and clinical setting
3. Quickly read and comprehend extensive oral and written information
4. Measure, calculate reason, analyze, integrate, and synthesize in the context of dental hygiene study
5. Work independently and as a part of a team
6. Function effectively under stress
7. Respond appropriately to emergencies
8. Comprehend three-dimensional relationships

E. BEHAVIORAL/EMOTIONAL

1. Implement measures to maintain own physical and mental health and emotional stability
2. Demonstrate emotional health required for the utilization of intellectual abilities and exercise good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the dental hygiene diagnosis and care of patients
3. Maintain professional, mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, students, faculty, staff, and other professionals under all circumstances including highly stressful situations
4. Demonstrate flexibility and adaptability to function effectively under stress and to adapt to an environment that may change rapidly without warning and/or in unpredictable ways - experience empathy for the situations and circumstances of others and effectively communicate that empathy

5. Able and willing to self-evaluate and change behavior when it interferes with productive individual and/or team relationships

F. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

1. Reason morally and practice professional, honest and ethical behavior and accountability
2. Learn and abide by professional standards of practice
3. Possess the attributes that include compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, honesty, responsibility, and tolerance
4. Respect for individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds, social, emotional, cultural, intellectual, religion and/or sexual orientation
5. Engage in patient care in all settings and be able to deliver care to all patient populations including but not limited to children, adolescents, adults, older adults, special needs and medically compromised patients
6. Present in a professional appearance