

What is Advocacy and Why Should You Care?

“With advocacy you have a vision and that creates a path for change.” – Michelle Erwin

The main objective of the Association of Alberta Dental Assistants is to serve as the provincial advocate for Registered Dental Assistants in our province.

The purpose of advocacy is to promote or reinforce a change in policy, programme or legislation. Rather than providing support directly to clients or users of services, advocacy aims at winning support from others and creating a supportive environment.

The Association of Alberta Dental Assistants is advocating on behalf of our profession with the provincial government Ministers of Health and Labour, with the College of Alberta Dental Assistants, with the Alberta Dental Association and College, with the national government Ministers of Health and Labour and with any other organization, group or individual whose policies, legislation or directives will affect our profession.

Advocacy seeks to ensure that people are able to:

- Have their voice heard on issues that are important to them
- Defend and safeguard their rights
- Have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made that will affect their lives

Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to:

- Express their views and concerns
- Access information and services
- Defend and promote their rights and responsibilities
- Explore choices and options

It is important to understand that advocacy is often a long term process and policy or legislative change is slow and subject to reversal. Advocacy requires ongoing effort, coordination, strategic thinking, research and information, communication, outreach and mobilization. Successful advocacy requires a team of individuals with a range of skills, including research, project management and policy skills, all of which we need to work through together, receiving feedback from as many RDAs as possible, using the multitude of talents individual RDAs possess, and relying on support from all Alberta RDAs.

The Association of Alberta Dental Assistants is committed to:

- Increasing awareness of legislative and public policy issues that may affect the profession of dental assisting.
- Providing mechanisms for professionals and the public to communicate with their legislators to support the profession.
- Improving public awareness of the profession of dental assisting.
- Providing a mechanism for professionals to network and collaborate on issues that affect the profession.

If our profession is going to thrive, we all have to be active participants in the business of our profession. As individuals, we have to actively engage in the process of advocacy to ensure a healthy future for our profession. We can no longer say that this will be an activity we engage in when we have "extra time", because our profession must always be ready to act proactively, react effectively to policies, legislation and directives affecting our profession, and quickly respond on behalf of our professional members.

Being actively engaged includes first and foremost supporting the business of our profession financially, through our tri-level professional association annual membership dues.

Another way to be actively engaged is to attend meetings and events where RDAs discuss issues of importance to our careers, listen to and participate in debate and vote on that business and decide upon the direction that our professional associations will take.

For those who want a more active role, serving our profession as a volunteer on a committee or on the Board of Directors of our Local/Provincial/National associations provides these organizations with a variety of perspectives and talents that will propel us forward. At least once in our career as an RDA we need to donate our time to filling a leadership role within our professional associations. This is an ethical obligation we have to ourselves, our profession and to those who will come after us, providing new RDAs with a solid foundation to build upon as we move into the future.

We invite you to make a difference for our profession by offering your long term support and contributing your time and talents to make our future one that we can be proud of achieving together - Join our team!