

## **DENTAL ASSISTING BLOOD BORNE INFECTION PREVENTION POLICY**

### **1. OUR COMMITMENT**

The Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) Dental Assisting program is committed to addressing the prevention of the spread of blood borne pathogens that may cause infectious diseases. The program faculty and staff recognize that a key element of infection control and prevention is the use of *Standard Precautions*. Teaching students to protect themselves and others is vital to the prevention of disease transmission.

### **2. SCOPE**

- a. All patients must be regarded as potentially infectious.
- b. *Standard Precautions* are taught to each student and used in both simulated and human situations.
- c. The rights of individuals who may have a blood borne infectious disease will be protected.

### **3. REFERENCE**

Kohn, W. G., Collins, A. S., Cleveland, J. L., Harte, J. A., Eklund, K. J., & Malvitz, D. M. (2003). Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings --- 2003 Retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5217a1.htm>

### **4. DEFINITIONS**

Pathogens – Viruses and bacteria that cause disease or illness.

Standard Precautions – The protocols apply to contact with 1) blood; 2) all body fluids, secretions, and excretions (except sweat), regardless of whether they contain blood; 3) non-intact skin; and 4) mucous membranes. Saliva has always been considered a potentially infectious material in dental infection control. *Standard Precautions* expand the elements of *Universal Precautions* into a standard of care designed to protect health Care Providers and patients from pathogens that can be spread by blood or any other body fluid, excretion, or secretion.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - Items such as gloves, masks, protective eyewear and protective attire (lab coats) intended to prevent exposure to blood and body fluids.

### **5. ADMISSION and EMPLOYMENT**

NWFSC Dental Assisting Program does not discriminate against employees, students, patients, or applicants for admission based solely on infectious disease status. Those who test positive for infectious disease or who are carriers of an infectious disease should seek counsel from their health care provider.

### **6. DENTAL ASSISTING SERVICES**

Patient infected with blood borne pathogens can be safely treated in the dental assisting laboratory or clinic setting. Although the primary method of instruction in the laboratory is simulation, selected skills are performed on actual patients. Current evidence indicates

that there is no significant risk of contracting blood borne diseases through the provision of dental treatment when *Standard Precautions* are routinely followed.

## **7. IMMUNIZATIONS**

The risk for exposure to Hepatitis B is higher for Dental Health Care Providers than the general population. It is recommended that students start the vaccination process for Hepatitis B as soon as they receive acceptance into the program. A comprehensive medical history, physical examination, dental examination, Tuberculin Skin Test and additional immunizations are required prior to enrollment in the Dental Assisting Program.

## **8. HIV TESTING**

Testing of NWFSC students for HIV is not required by the Dental Assisting Program. However, health care workers and students who perform exposure-prone procedures on patients are encouraged to be tested voluntarily in order to know their HIV status.

## **9. OBLIGATION TO REPORT**

Students are obligated to report any illnesses or conditions that may affect their ability to complete the program requirements. Students are allowed to continue their education as long as their medical condition permits patient care and their health or another individual's health is not at risk as determined by a student's health care provider. In the event that an individual poses a risk to others, the Dental Assisting Program Coordinator will assist the student.

## **10. CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information regarding the health status of an individual is confidential and protected by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1994 and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996.

## **11. STANDARD PRECAUTIONS**

Standard precautions involve the use of protective barriers such as gloves, gowns, masks, and protective eyewear, which can reduce the risk of exposure of the individual's skin or mucous membranes to potentially infectious materials. Personal protective equipment (PPE) for faculty and students is removed before leaving the clinic and disposed of properly. All students and faculty are to take precautions to prevent injuries caused by needles, scalpels, and other sharp instruments or devices. In the event of injury, the *Dental Assisting Occupational Safety Manual* is located in the Dental Assisting Laboratory.

## **12. BLOOD BORNE PATHOGEN AND INFECTION CONTROL TRAINING**

The Dental Assisting program complies with all local, state, and federal infection control policies including the application of Standard Precautions as stipulated by the Centers for Disease Control. Written policies and instruction on infection control protocols are used to minimize the risk of disease transmission. Students are taught Blood Borne Pathogen and Infection Control subject matter during a mandatory orientation prior to any potential for exposure. The program curriculum incorporates required infection control and prevention methods into new skill development and subject matter.

## **13. ENFORCEMENT OF PRACTICE LIMITATIONS OR MODIFICATIONS**

Any student or faculty member who engages in unsafe or careless clinical practices, which create risks to the health of patients, employees, or students, will be subject to disciplinary action that may include dismissal from the program.

#### **14. FINGERNAILS**

Keeping nails short is key to infection prevention because the majority of flora on the hands are found under and around the fingernails. Fingernails should be short enough to allow for thorough cleaning underneath them and to prevent glove tears. Sharp nail edges or broken nails are also likely to increase glove failure. Long artificial or natural nails can make donning gloves more difficult and can cause gloves to tear more readily. Students and faculty will abide by the program's Dress Code/Uniform Policy as outlined in the Dental Assisting Student Handbook.

#### **15. EXPOSURE TO BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS**

Faculty or students who are exposed to blood borne pathogens in the course of their clinical care are expected to follow the procedures set forth in the *Dental Assisting Occupational Safety Manual*. *If a student is exposed to a patient's body fluid in a manner that may transmit a blood borne or infectious disease, the student should follow Post-exposure Control protocol in accordance with the Blood borne Pathogen Standard and consult his or her health care provider for health care.*

#### **16. ENGINEERING AND WORKPRACTICE CONTROLS**

Engineering controls reduce exposure to blood and other potentially infectious materials (OPIM) from needles and other sharps. Students and faculty will utilize Work Practice controls consistent with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Blood borne Pathogens Standard for safe handling of sharps. Puncture resistant disposal receptacles are located near the area where sharps are used. Only a single handed needle recapping technique and use of needle recapping device are approved practices in the program.

#### **17. ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS**

Environmental hazards of dental assisting include: disorders associated with repetitive activities, exposure to high decibel sounds, exposure to hazardous chemicals or substances, exposure to blood or body fluids, accidental injury, exposure to radiation and allergic reactions to latex or other chemical agents.

#### **18. UNIFORM LAUNDERING**

Uniforms consist of a scrub top, pants and a long sleeved lab jacket with ribbed cuffs. Dental Assisting students must wear the lab jacket over the scrubs when participating in procedures generating splash, spatter or aerosols. Uniforms and lab jackets that become contaminated with blood or OPIM should be removed and placed in a fluid impervious bag to be laundered separately from general laundry at home to avoid transmission of potentially infectious materials.

#### **19. COMMUNICATION OF BLOODBORNE PATHOGEN POLICY TO PATIENTS**

The Dental Assisting Program policy on Blood borne Infection Prevention is available upon request to all patients. Patients are asked to read and sign the Authorization and consent for Treatment, HIPPA Notice of Privacy Practices, and Authorization for Release of Identifying Health Information forms for dental assisting laboratory participation.