

Whether it is within the scope of practice of dental hygienists to provide teeth brushing, flossing, interproximal plaque control or the use of disclosing solution along with education to persons in nursing homes, private homes, hospitals, clinics or schools – Advisory Opinion

It is the opinion of the Board of Dentistry (“Board”) that if a dental hygienist is holding himself/herself out as a hygienist in performing any diagnostic, therapeutic, preventative, or related educational services as outlined above, they are authorized to do so only under a collaborative agreement with a dentist pursuant to SDCL §§ 36-6A-40 and 36-6A-40.1. To provide dental services above without the appropriate oversight as required by the statute would be a violation of the Dental Practice Act.

It is the opinion of the Board that if any person, including a dental hygienist or former hygienist, is holding himself/herself out as a volunteer and/or layperson, it is permissible for them to provide the above outlined activities. If, in the capacity as a volunteer or layperson, the individual holds himself/herself out as practicing as a dental hygienist or purports to be a dental hygienist while providing such activities, they would be considered to be engaging in the unauthorized practice of a dental hygienist pursuant to SDCL § 36-6A-28 and could be subject to discipline by the Board or guilty of a class 1 misdemeanor as applicable.

This advisory opinion was rendered by the Board upon submission of a written request. Although advisory opinions are not judicially reviewable and do not have the force and effect of law, they do serve as a guideline for dental hygienists who wish to engage in safe dental hygiene practices. This advisory opinion was adopted at the meeting of the South Dakota Board of Dentistry on January 15, 2016.