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**Informational Letter Regarding Independent Practice Dental Hygienists
and Issuing Authorities to Practice under the New Dental Practice Act**

During the 127th Second Regular Session, the former dental practice act was repealed and replaced with Title 32, Chapter 143 "Dental Professions" which became effective July 28, 2016. There were many changes to the new law, including streamlining the dental hygiene licensing categories. For example, under the former dental practice act, an RDH would maintain a separate permit for nitrous oxide, a separate permit for local anesthesia, separate notification for public health supervision status, a separate license for dental hygiene therapist, and for those who sought their independent practice dental hygiene license - those applicants would have to surrender their RDH license.

The new law structures the dental hygiene license categories such that all qualifying hygienists will be issued an RDH license and be issued additional authorities to practice under the same license. See description below:

OLD LAW - Separate hygiene licenses required for each hygiene practice type:

Registered Dental Hygienist (RDH) - separate license
Independent Dental Hygienist (IPDH) - separate license
Dental Hygiene Therapist (DHT) - separate license
Provisional Dental Hygiene Therapist (DHX) - separate license
Public Health Supervision status (PHS) - separate notification process
Local Anesthesia Permit (LAN) - separate permit
Nitrous Oxide Permit (NOX) - separate permit

NEW LAW - One hygiene license required and **qualifying** authorities listed on the license, as applicable:

Registered Dental Hygienist (RDH) - one license with the following **qualifying** authorities listed, as applicable:

- IPDH (listed on RDH license as authority)
- PHS (listed on RDH license as authority)
- DHT or DHX (listed on RDH license as authority)
- LAN (listed on RDH license as authority)
- NOX (listed on RDH license as authority)

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For example, a dental hygienist who currently holds a separate permit for nitrous oxide and a separate permit for local anesthesia (for a total of 3 licenses/permits) will transition over time such that they only need to maintain one license. The one license will be an RDH license that identifies the authorities to administer nitrous oxide and local anesthesia on the RDH license itself. Similarly, an IPDH that holds a separate permit for nitrous oxide and a separate permit for local anesthesia will also transition over time, but the first transition for IPDH is to re-establish the RDH license and issue an IPDH authority.

To that end, the Board is implementing its first phase of changes for IPDH licensees starting on October 1, 2016. IPDH licensees will continue to renew their licenses as normal - which means renew online prior to December 31, 2016. However, the license you will receive after renewing successfully will be an RDH license that lists an IPDH authority on the RDH license. So if you previously held an RDH license with the Maine Board of Dental Practice, then you will be re-issued the original RDH license number and the ability to practice as an IPDH will be listed as an authority on the RDH license.

Please note that your license number will change once you transition to the RDH license with an IPDH authority and you will likely need to adjust your paperwork/billing information accordingly. If you are an IPDH that provides services under Public Health Supervision status - then you will also receive a new license number, but will continue to notify the Board pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Board's Rules of your Public Health Supervision activities.

The Board recognizes that the transition to the hygiene authorities will take time and encourages you to contact board staff at any time should you have any questions. The Board would prefer to answer your question directly as opposed to you hearing potentially misinformation from a third party.

***Note:** As mentioned above, the Board will transition over time other hygiene license or permit types that you may currently hold and add them as authorities under your RDH license. In the meantime, you will continue to renew those licenses, permits, and public health supervision status separately in accordance with the Board's rules. Expanded Function Dental Assistant (EFDA) license is not a hygiene authority - so hygienists who have an EFDA license will need to maintain that license separately from their RDH license.

FMI:

Maine State Legislature: <http://legislature.maine.gov/>

State Agency Rulemaking: <http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/index.html>

Board staff email: dental.board@maine.gov