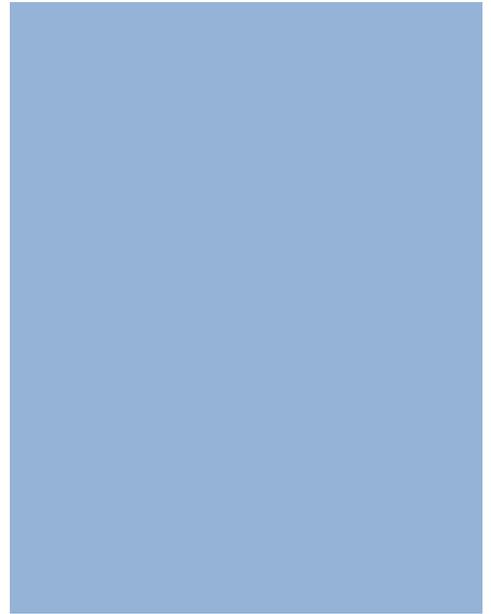


Connection Opportunities Professionals Guide



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of HEALTH SERVICES

Division of Public Health
Oral Health Program

P-03585A
(10/2025)

Connection Opportunities

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Background	2
Connection opportunities	2
Meet a dental profession student	2
Meet a dental professional	2
Shadow a dental professional.....	2
Employment opportunities.....	2
Making a connection.....	3
Roles and responsibilities of student.....	3
Benefits for dental profession student.....	3
Benefits for dental professional.....	3
Wisconsin Oral Health Program contact information	4
Meet a Dental Profession Student.....	4
Roles and responsibilities of dental profession student	4
Meet a Dental Professional.....	4
Roles and responsibilities of dental professional	4
Shadow a Dental Professional	5
Roles and responsibilities of dental professional	5
Employment Opportunities	6
Benefits for dental employer	6
How to get started for dental employers	6
Meetings	6
Guiding career discussions with students	6
Guidelines and best practices.....	7
Evaluation	7

Introduction

Background

The goal of the Wisconsin Oral Health Workforce Pathway Program (WOHWPP) is to engage students in oral health careers and create a sustainable program focused on increasing the geographic distribution of the Wisconsin oral health workforce. It is made up of Connection Opportunities, [Future Oral Health Workforce Day](#), and apprenticeship opportunities. The WOHWPP seeks to recruit prospective students from rural, underrepresented, lower resourced communities, or Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (DHPSAs).

Connection opportunities

There will be four different levels of connection opportunities: meet a dental profession student, meet a dental professional, shadow a dental professional, and employment opportunities. Connection opportunities encourages dental profession students and dental professionals to become involved in offering guidance to Wisconsin high school students and adult learners with an interest in oral health careers.

Meet a dental profession student

A dental profession student will provide guidance and support to individuals as they consider a career in the dental field. The student and dental profession student will determine what that guidance and support look like and how often they will connect. A minimum of two meetings is encouraged.

Meet a dental professional

A dental professional will provide guidance and support to an individual as they consider a career in the dental field. The student and dental professional will determine what that guidance and support look like and how often they will connect. A minimum of two meetings is encouraged.

Shadow a dental professional

A dental professional will provide at least one job shadow opportunity and offer guidance and support to an individual as they consider a career in the dental field. The student and dental professional will determine what that guidance and support look like and how often they will connect. A minimum of one meeting in addition to the job shadow is encouraged.

Employment opportunities

Employment opportunities are available through the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Youth Apprenticeship (YA) program's dental assisting track. The YA program offers a rewarding employment opportunity for high school juniors and seniors to train as dental assistants. Students who participate gain valuable hands-on experience that sets a foundation for a career in dentistry, all while earning a paycheck.

We hope that you can find a valuable opportunity to form a connection with a student and show them what an oral health career is like.

Making a connection

Interested individuals and dental professionals interested in connecting will complete and submit a [Connection Opportunities form](#). The Wisconsin Oral Health Program staff will connect students with a dental profession student or dental professional based on the information provided in the form. We will make every effort to make connections based on career interest, demographics, and geographic location (for job shadowing purposes) whenever possible. Our goal is to match students with the exact profession(s) they are interested in, but despite our best effort, sometimes this is not possible. Students may be matched with someone in a similar profession and/or someone enrolled in a dental program similar to their personal interest.

We will make every effort to match all students who have expressed a genuine interest in working in the dental field. If we receive more interest than we have available connections for, we may not be able to match all students who apply.

Roles and responsibilities of student

- Complete [Connection Opportunities form](#) indicating interest in connecting with a dental profession student or dental professional.
- Reach out to the dental profession student or dental professional. The Wisconsin Oral Health Program staff will make the connection to a dental profession student or dental professional. Students are then responsible for setting up their own meetings and communications.
- Maintain a professional demeanor at all times during the process.
- Maintain communication with the Wisconsin Oral Health Program by completing brief check-ins via email.
- Notify the [Wisconsin Oral Health Program](#) at DHSOralHealthPathway@dhs.wisconsin.gov immediately of any concerns.
- Complete HIPAA training, if participating in a job shadow.
- Complete evaluation surveys at the end of the experience.

Benefits for dental profession student

- Gain personal satisfaction from providing advice and guidance.
- Share things you wish you would have known.
- Feel good about making a difference.
- Gain valuable leadership skills.
- Improve communication skills.
- Learn new things.
- Build your resume.

Benefits for dental professional

- Connect to future skilled workers to build your workforce.
- Gain personal satisfaction from providing advice and guidance.
- Share things you wish you would have known.

- Gain valuable leadership skills.
- Improve communication skills.
- Learn new things; you never know what the students may teach you.

Wisconsin Oral Health Program contact information

Please contact the [Wisconsin Oral Health Program](#) at DHSOralHealthPathway@dhs.wisconsin.gov with any questions or concerns.

Meet a Dental Profession Student

Students will connect with a current student pursuing a dental or dental training program degree. The dental profession student will provide guidance and support to the student as they consider a career in the dental field. The student and dental student peer will determine what that guidance and support will look like and how often they will connect. A minimum of two meetings is encouraged.

Roles and responsibilities of dental profession student

- Complete [Connection Opportunities form](#) indicating interest in connecting with a student. The Wisconsin Oral Health Program will email you to notify you of your student match.
- Connect (in-person, via phone, or by email) with student. Any meeting and communication schedule will be set by the dental profession student and interested individual to account for needs of both parties.
- Respond to student in a timely manner.
- Maintain a professional demeanor.
- Maintain communication with the Wisconsin Oral Health Program by completing brief check-ins via email.
- Notify the [Wisconsin Oral Health Program](#) at DHSOralHealthPathway@dhs.wisconsin.gov immediately of any concerns or whether you decide you discontinue participation in Connection Opportunities.
- Recruit others to participate in the future if you see value in this opportunity.
- Complete evaluation surveys at the end of the peer engagement experience.

Meet a Dental Professional

Students will connect with a dental professional. The dental professional will provide guidance and support to the interested individual as they consider a career in the dental field. The student and dental professional will determine what that guidance and support look like and how often they will connect. A minimum of two meetings is encouraged.

Roles and responsibilities of dental professional

- Complete [Connection Opportunities form](#) indicating interest in connecting with a student. The Wisconsin Oral Health Program will email you to notify you of your student match.
- Connect (in-person, via phone, or by email) with student. Any meeting and communication schedule will be set by the dental professional and interested individuals to account for needs of both parties.

- Respond to student in a timely manner.
- Maintain a professional demeanor.
- Maintain communication with the Wisconsin Oral Health Program by completing brief check-ins via email.
- Notify the [Wisconsin Oral Health Program](#) at DHSOralHealthPathway@dhs.wisconsin.gov immediately of any concerns or whether you decide you discontinue participation in Connection Opportunities.
- Recruit others to participate in the future if you see value in this opportunity.
- Complete evaluation surveys at the end of the professional advising experience.

Shadow a Dental Professional

Students will connect with a dental professional that will provide at least one job shadow opportunity and offer guidance and support to the student as they consider a career in the dental field. The student and dental professional will determine what that guidance and support look like and how often they will connect.

Prior to job shadowing, should complete HIPAA training. They can access “public-facing” training instructions from the University of Wisconsin-Madison by visiting [HIPAA External Training](#). At the end of the instructions, the student will be directed to complete a training attestation to serve as verification of completion of the training. It will be emailed to the student for their records. The student is responsible for completing HIPAA training and forwarding that verification to the dental clinic. It is very important that all students understand HIPAA and confidentiality.

Roles and responsibilities of dental professional

- Complete [Connection Opportunities form](#) indicating interest in connecting with a student. The Wisconsin Oral Health Program will email you to notify you of your student match.
- Connect (in-person, via phone, or by email) with student. Any meeting and communication schedule will be set by the dental professional and student to account for needs of both parties.
- Verify the student has completed HIPAA training.
- Direct student to complete any facility-specific paperwork that is needed prior to job shadow.
- Allow student to job shadow at least once over the course of the year.
- Respond to student in a timely manner.
- Maintain a professional demeanor.
- Maintain communication with the Wisconsin Oral Health Program by completing brief check-ins via email.
- Notify the [Wisconsin Oral Health Program](#) at DHSOralHealthPathway@dhs.wisconsin.gov immediately of any concerns or whether you decide you discontinue participation in Connection Opportunities.
- Recruit others to participate in the future if you see value in this opportunity.
- Complete evaluation surveys at the end of the job shadowing experience.

Employment Opportunities

Employment opportunities are available through the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Youth Apprenticeship (YA) program's dental assisting track. The YA program offers a rewarding employment opportunity for high school juniors and seniors to train as dental assistants. Students who participate gain valuable hands-on experience that sets a foundation for a career in dentistry, all while earning a paycheck. YA combines two semesters of occupation-related instruction with on-the-job learning. Students work at least 450 hours each year of their apprenticeship, while taking related courses at the same time. After completing a one- or two-year YA, students receive real work experience that trains them for an in-demand occupation including dental assistant. The dental assisting track is currently the only dental career available for students in the YA program.

Benefits for dental employer

- Train skilled workers your way.
- Increase productivity.
- Become more competitive.
- Retain and build workforce.
- Provide mentorship.
- Invest in your team.

Check out what [participating employers say about training apprentices](#) and see [how many employers in the health science industry are participating!](#)

How to get started for dental employers

- Complete [Connection Opportunities form](#) indicating interest in participating in the YA program. .
- Visit [Youth Apprenticeship - Employers webpage](#) and scroll down to the "How do I get started?" section for employers.

Meetings

Guiding career discussions with students

- Set a flexible agenda for the meeting. Topics may change depending on conversation with the student.
- Help the student discover their best possible career choice.
- Answer any questions the student has about what it's like working in the dental field or being in a dental training program.
- Share your experiences while assisting the student in finding their own paths. What worked best for you may or may not work for best for them.
- Encourage the students to research the different careers in the dental field.
- Ask the student what they thought about the job shadow experience. If the student does not think that career would be the best career for them to pursue, are there other careers you think they may like better? If so, encourage them to do some research on other dental health care careers or even job shadow another career.

Guidelines and best practices

- Maintain confidentiality of student information.
- Maintain professionalism at all times.
- Provide direct, honest feedback and guidance.
- Refer student to additional resources as you see fit.
- Discuss expectations and decide on the best method of communication and a mutually beneficial meeting and communication schedule.
- Set collaborative agenda incorporating student interests and questions.
- Be open to feedback.
- Be supportive of the students and don't judge.
- Share your past experiences and help the students to learn from your mistakes.
- Listen to what the students have to say.
- Ask questions and show enthusiasm.
- Be a coach, mentor, and advisor. Do not serve as a social worker, parental figure, or professional counselor.
- Encourage the student to perform at maximum level.
- Encourage the student to set goals, but do not set goals for the student.
- Recognize and respect differences in perspective.
- Do not spend money on the student or allow the student to ask you for money.

Evaluation

It is our expectation that each student, dental profession student, and dental professional will maintain communication with the Wisconsin Oral Health Program and complete evaluation surveys. The Wisconsin Oral Health Program will send brief check-ins via email. In addition to check-ins, each participant will complete an exit survey at the end of the experience.

Students, dental profession students, and dental professionals should reach out to the [Wisconsin Oral Health Program](#) at DHSOralHealthPathway@dhs.wisconsin.gov with questions or concerns about Connection Opportunities through the Wisconsin Oral Health Workforce Pathway Program.

This publication is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$400,000 with 40% financed with nongovernmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit [HRSA.gov](https://www.hrsa.gov).