

Lasers and Dental Hygiene

The American Dental Hygienists' Association supports dental hygienists' use of lasers within the dental hygiene scope of practice. ([ADHA Policy Manual](#))

In a position statement, the Academy of Laser Dentistry said the following: "The Academy of Laser Dentistry (ALD) supports the use of lasers in dentistry when used by a properly trained and licensed dental professional where the procedure is safe, effective, consistent with his/her education and experience, and within the scope of his/her license." ([Full Statement](#))

Below are the relevant state scope of practice provisions on the use of lasers by dental hygienists:

Alabama

Scope of Practice: [270-X-3-.10\(1\)\(x\)](#)

Supervision: Direct

Dental hygienists may use laser and/or narrow band (light) imaging technology for preliminary diagnostic purposes only with the dentist's final examination and diagnosis.

Alaska

Scope of Practice: [Sec 08.32.110\(a\)\(1\)\(F\)](#)

Supervision: General

A person licensed to practice the profession of dental hygiene in the state may, under the general supervision of a licensed dentist, perform other dental operations and services delegated by a licensed dentist if the dental operations and services are not prohibited by (c) of this section. Subsection (c) does not prohibit lasers.

Arizona

Scope of Practice: [R4-11-601\(H\)](#)

Supervision: General

To qualify to use emerging scientific technology as authorized by A.R.S. § 32-1281(D)(2), a dental hygienist shall successfully complete a course of study that meets the following criteria:

1. Is a course offered by a recognized dental school as defined in A.R.S. § 32-1201(17), a recognized dental hygiene school as defined in A.R.S. § 32-1201(16), or sponsored by a national or state dental or dental hygiene association or government agency;
2. Includes didactic instruction with a written examination;
3. Includes hands-on clinical instruction; and
4. Is technology that is scientifically based and supported by studies published in peer reviewed dental journals.

Arkansas

Scope of Practice: [Article XI: \(A\)\(2\)\(b\)](#)

Supervision: General

A licensed dental hygienist may be delegated: Oral prophylaxis, scaling, root planing and curettage. If a laser instrument is used, the dental hygienist and their supervising dentist must submit to the Board proof of successful completion of an approved educational course on the use of that type of laser prior to its usage for any patient treatment.

California

Scope of Practice: [§1914](#)

Supervision: General or direct depending on service or procedure

A registered dental hygienist may use any material or device approved for use in the performance of a service or procedure within his or her scope of practice under the appropriate level of supervision, if he or she has the appropriate education and training required to use the material or device.

Colorado

Scope of Practice: [Rule 1.24](#)

Supervision: Indirect or Direct

Laser use by a dental hygienist can only be performed under the indirect or direct supervision of a dentist and must be within the dental hygiene scope of practice. A licensee who is a laser user must first successfully complete training that covers a minimum of eight hours of laser physics, safety, and appropriate use, to include a hands on component, prior to utilizing the laser.

Connecticut

Scope of Practice: Silent

Supervision: Silent

The practice act and regulations do not mention use of lasers. [Section 20-126/\(e\)](#) does prohibit dental hygienist from cutting or removing any hard or soft tissue.

Delaware

Scope of Practice: Silent

Supervision: General

The practice act and regulations do not mention use of lasers. [Rule 2.5](#) places the full responsibility for the work done by dental hygienists directly upon the dentist.

Florida

Scope of Practice: [64B5-16.001](#)

Supervision: Direct, indirect, or general

Dental hygienists may use lasers as an assessment device. Lasers are otherwise not permitted for remediable tasks.

Georgia

Scope of Practice: [Rule 150-5-.03](#)

Nothing in these rules shall be construed as authorizing dental hygienists to utilize other techniques in the course of the performance of their duties, otherwise authorized by these rules. Only dentists licensed by the Georgia Board of Dentistry shall be authorized to perform procedures involving laser technology which alters tissue, creates thermal effect, or is intended to cut, coagulate, photocoagulate, vaporize, or ablate essentially any soft or hard tissues of the body.

Hawaii

Scope of Practice: Silent

Supervision: Direct or general

The practice act and regulations do not mention use of lasers. [§447-3](#) states a dental hygienist may provide any other procedures delegated by a dentist in accordance with the rules of the board of dentistry.

Idaho

Scope of Practice: [19.01.01 – 033.03](#)

Supervision: Direct

A dental hygienist may use lasers restricted to gingival curettage and bleaching.

Illinois

Scope of Practice: [§1220.240](#)

Supervision: General

Dental hygienists are prohibited from using lasers to remove tissue.

Indiana

Scope of Practice: [§25-13-1-10](#)

Supervision: Direct or prescriptive supervision

A dental hygienist may not use a laser to cut, ablate, or cauterize hard or soft tissue to provide treatment to a patient.

Iowa

Scope of Practice: [Board of Dental Examiners' Position Statement – April 17, 2003](#)

Supervision: General, direct, or public health supervision

The board recommends that all licensees need to be fully instructed in a recognized course prior to utilizing a laser. In addition, any services provided by a licensee, regardless of the device used, must be within the scope of practice for each licensee. Dental hygienists, for example, cannot utilize a laser or other device to cut tissue.

Kansas

Scope of Practice: Silent

Supervision: Direct or general

The practice act and regulations do not mention use of lasers. §65-1456 includes preventive and therapeutic procedures within the dental hygiene scope of practice.

Kentucky

Scope of Practice: [KAR 8:562 Section 14](#)

Supervision: Direct

A dental hygienist may perform laser debridement after submitting an application and fee and completing board-approved training.

Louisiana

Scope of Practice: [§701\(B\)\(2\) & §1301](#)

A dentist may not delegate to a dental hygienist: a surgical or cutting procedure on hard or soft tissue including with a laser. A laser capable of the removal of hard or soft tissue may be employed in the treatment of a dental patient only by a licensed dentist.

Maine

Scope of Practice: Silent

Supervision: General

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers. §18374 allows dental hygienists to perform all procedures necessary for complete prophylaxis, including root planing.

Maryland

Scope of Practice: Silent

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers. The Board of Dental Examiner's [Permissible Procedures Chart](#) does not include laser bleaching within the scope of dental hygiene.

Massachusetts

Scope of Practice: [234 CMR 5.11](#)

Supervision: Direct

Dental hygienists may use diagnostic and periodontic non-cutting lasers.

Michigan

Scope of Practice: [Position Statement of the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs](#)

Supervision: Subject to position statement and procedure.

A physician/dentist may delegate the use of laser equipment to a licensed or unlicensed individual if the delegated individual works under the physician/dentist's supervision. The position statement includes minimum requirements for supervision.

Minnesota

Scope of Practice: Silent

The practice act and regulations are silent on lasers.

Mississippi

Scope of Practice: [Rule 13](#)

The Board of Dental Examiners has [determined](#) that dental hygienists are not permitted to perform sulcular debridement of periodontal pockets using a diode dental laser. Additionally, the board determined dental hygienists may not use lasers for bacteria reduction and reduction of pocket depths. The board also determined dental hygienists may not use soft tissue lasers to assist in the treatment of periodontal diseases and other soft tissue disorders.

Missouri

Scope of Practice: Silent

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers.

Montana

Scope of Practice: Silent

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers.

Nebraska

Scope of Practice: Silent

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers.

Nevada

Scope of Practice: [NAC 631.033 & 631.210](#)

Supervision: Supervision by a dentist

In order to use lasers intrasulcular periodontal procedures or tooth whitening procedures, a licensee must include with the application for renewal:

1. A statement certifying that each laser used by the licensee in his or her practice of dentistry or dental hygiene has been cleared by the Food and Drug Administration for use in dentistry; and
2. Proof that he or she has successfully completed a course in laser proficiency that:
 - (a) Is at least 6 hours in length; and
 - (b) Is based on the Curriculum Guidelines and Standards for Dental Laser Education, adopted by reference pursuant to NAC 631.035.

Through [Advisory Opinion 15-0619](#), the Board found that lasers used for diagnostic purposes are exempt from the regulation above.

New Hampshire

Scope of Practice: Silent

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers.

New Jersey

Scope of Practice: Prohibitive language [§13:30-1A.3 & 13:30-1A.4](#)

The administrative code includes several prohibitive clauses like: “Such instruments shall not include lasers that are capable of altering, cutting, burning, or damaging hard or soft tissue”

New Mexico

Scope of Practice: [§16.5.29.12](#)

Supervision: Indirect

Dental hygienists may use lasers for therapeutic use including soft tissue curettage, sulcular debridement, and tissue disinfection in periodontal therapy. Requirements include using lasers approved by the FDA, complete an educational program that is a minimum of 6 hours with hands-on clinical simulation training, and post certificate in dental facility.

New York

Scope of Practice: Silent

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers.

North Carolina

Scope of Practice: [21 NCAC 16G .0101](#)

Supervision: Direct

Dental hygienists may use laser fluorescence detectors in preparation for the dentist's examination and diagnosis of cavities

North Dakota

Scope of Practice: [Board Position](#)

Supervision: General

It is the position of the Board that any services provided by a licensee, regardless of the device used, must be within the scope of practice for each licensee. Whenever a new treatment modality is brought forward, it is the Board's policy that the dentist must have equal or greater proficiency and training in the technology. Neither the particular technology utilized nor amendments to scope of practice alter the fact that all licensees are responsible for their individual actions with the dentist ultimately responsible for all care provided in each dental office.

Ohio

Scope of Practice: [4715-11-06](#)

Dental hygienists are not allowed to use lasers except for caries susceptibility testing devices.

Oklahoma

Scope of Practice: Silent

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers. [Regulation §195:15-5](#) prohibits dental assistants from utilizing lasers.

Oregon

Scope of Practice: Silent

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers. [Regulation §818-042-0040](#) prohibits dental assistants from utilizing lasers, except laser-curing lights.

Pennsylvania

Scope of Practice: [Practice Act](#) and [Regulation §33.215](#)

Practice Act: Licensed dentists may assign to dental hygienists intra-oral procedures which the hygienists have been educated to perform and which require their professional competence and skill but which do not require the professional competence and skill of the dentist. Such assignments shall be under the supervision of a licensed dentist.

Regulation:

(a) Background and purpose. The use of lasers in experimental and institutional settings has raised questions with regard to using this technology in the dental office. In addressing this issue, the Board has been mindful of its principal mandate: protection of the public. Section 4.1(a)(8) and (9) of the act (63 P. S. § 123.1(a)(8) and (9)) authorizes the Board to take disciplinary action against licensees who engage in unprofessional conduct or who commit acts of negligence, incompetence or malpractice. The use of lasers may implicate both provisions by, for example, generating complaints of incompetent treatment or treatment that fails to conform to acceptable standards of practice. The Board offers the following guidelines to assist its licensees in conforming their behavior to the act. In a disciplinary action brought against a dentist for treatment involving a laser, the Board will consider whether these guidelines were followed.

(b) Guidelines. A dentist who uses a laser in private practice shall:

- (1) Be familiar with and conform to regulations on lasers promulgated by the Food and Drug Administration.
- (2) Possess clinical competency in the use of lasers. The Board recommends a minimum of 6 hours of instruction given by an accredited institution or by a manufacturer of lasers sponsored by such an institution. The instruction should include hands-on training and should cover all known risks to patients, staff and the practitioner.

Rhode Island

Scope of Practice: Silent

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers.

South Carolina

Scope of Practice: [Board Policy](#)

Dental hygienists are not authorized to use lasers in performing bleaching of teeth procedures; they may, however, perform the isolation and clean-up procedures

South Dakota

Scope of Practice: Silent

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers. [Regulation §20:43:08:10](#) prohibits dental assistants from utilizing lasers.

Tennessee

Scope of Practice: [Board Policy](#) & [§0460-03-.09](#)

Supervision: Under supervision of a dentist

Dental hygienists may use lasers for examination and periodontal treatment. Additionally, a dental hygienist may use lasers for debridement and bacterial reduction following completion of a didactic and hands-on training course.

Texas

Scope of Practice: [§115.2](#)

Supervision: Direct

Dental hygienists may use lasers as long as the procedure is not irreversible or involves intentional cutting. Prior to using lasers, dental hygienist must complete at least 12 hours of continuing education related to laser use.

Utah

Scope of Practice: [R156-69-602](#)

Supervision: General

Dental hygienists may perform laser bleaching and laser periodontal debridement.

Vermont

Scope of Practice: Silent; [Rules pending](#)

Supervision: Determined by practice agreement

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers. Rules are pending that specifically mention use of periodontal lasers within the dental hygiene scope of practice.

Virginia

Scope of Practice: [18VAC60-25-40](#)

Supervision: Indirect or General

Dental hygienists may use non-surgical lasers for scaling, root planning, or gingival curettage of natural and restored teeth.

Washington

Scope of Practice: Silent

The practice act and regulations are silent on the use of lasers

West Virginia

Scope of Practice: [Position Statement](#)

The Board regards the use of any laser which can cut tissue to be practicing dentistry, and therefore limits its use to dentists. This includes the so-called “low power” lasers used for periodontal treatments, such as pocket debridement, scaling, polishing, planing, and the removal of calculus deposits. The Board will allow the use of lasers that are used as an alternative to a traditional curing light to be used by a dental hygienist or dental assistant for the sole purpose of curing resin restorations. In addition, the Board will also allow the use of the laser as a diagnostic aid by a dental hygienist or dental assistant for interpretation by the dentist.

Wisconsin

Scope of Practice: [Position Statement](#)

It is the position of the Wisconsin Dental Examining Board that utilization of a laser device by a hygienist, is allowed when used within the scope of practice of dental hygiene and in adherence to Wis. Stat. § 447.06(2)(b), § 447.06(2)(c), § 447.06(2)(d), and § 447.06(2)(e).

- At this time, laser use within the scope of dental hygiene practice is as an adjunct device to scaling and root planning.
- Training is necessary and should include a hands-on proficiency course provided by a recognized sponsor of continuing education, in accordance with the current rules for continuing education.
- Licensees utilizing laser technology should maintain documentation of the satisfactory completion of the formal continuing education or training.

Wyoming

Scope of Practice: [Chapter 7, Section 5](#)

Dental hygienists with an expanded functions permit, may use lasers to provide soft tissue therapy within the dental hygienists scope of practice. Dental hygienists shall NOT use lasers at settings intended to cut/remove hard tissue or tooth structure