



Career First Institute

Dental Assistant Program

Train for your first role in dentistry in ten weeks.

Learning administrative assisting, chairside skills, OSHA/ sterilization, impressions and radiology inside a working dental office.



Call us

(571) 348-0109



Email us

admin@careerfirst.org



Visit us

9360 Richmond Hwy, Lorton, VA 22079



Website

www.careerfirst.org

10

weeks

80

clock hours

70%

hands-on lab time



Certified to operate by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)



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Ready to talk?

Book a free one-on-one meeting with our admissions team.

[Book a meeting](#)

Why Dental Assisting Matters Now

Every dental visit depends on a skilled assistant. Dentists call it four-handed dentistry: two hands belong to the dentist, and two belong to you.

Dental assistants keep a practice running. They prepare treatment rooms, sterilize instruments, take x-rays, support the dentist during procedures, and make sure patients feel cared for from the moment they sit down to the moment they check out.

Demand for this work keeps growing as more people seek preventive and cosmetic care, and dental offices across Northern Virginia need people who can step in ready to help. In Virginia, you can begin as a Dental Assistant I, an entry-level role that does not require a state license, and add a radiation certification so you can take dental x-rays.



By the numbers

7%

projected job growth for dental assistants from 2025 to 2035, much faster than the average for all occupations

53,000

openings for dental assistants projected each year, on average, over the decade

\$48,070

median annual wage for dental assistants nationwide in May 2025

388,600

dental assistant jobs across the United States in 2025

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Dental Assistants, [bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dental-assistants.htm](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dental-assistants.htm) (accessed September 2026). Wages vary by location, experience and employer.

About the Program

The Dental Assistant Program prepares you to work in a dental office as an entry-level dental assistant, sterilization technician or clinical assistant.

You learn the way the job is actually done. Classroom lessons explain the why, then you move straight into the treatment room to practice the how: setting trays, passing instruments, taking impressions and positioning x-rays. Because training happens in a real dental office after patient hours, the equipment, layout and workflow you practice with are the same ones you will use on the job.

Program	Dental Assistant Program, delivered in person in Lorton, Virginia
Duration	10 weeks, 80 clock hours
Learning format	Classroom instruction paired with hands-on labs, with 56 of the 80 hours spent in the lab
Schedule options	Weekday evenings (Monday and Wednesday, or Tuesday and Thursday) or Saturdays
Class size	About 10 students per instructor in the classroom and about 5 students per instructor during hands-on training
Training site	A fully equipped, working dental office with treatment rooms, a sterilization area, x-ray equipment and a lab
Eligibility	18 or older with a high school diploma or GED. No prior dental or healthcare experience needed.
Credential	Dental Assistant Program Completion Certificate from Career First Institute
X-ray preparation	Radiology coursework that prepares you for DANB's RHS or NOVA dental radiation certification
Tuition	Contact our admissions team for current tuition and payment options

Who the program is for



Recent graduates

exploring a first career in healthcare



Career changers

ready for stable, people-focused work



Working adults

who need evening or weekend classes



Hands-on learners

who learn best by doing

About Career First Institute

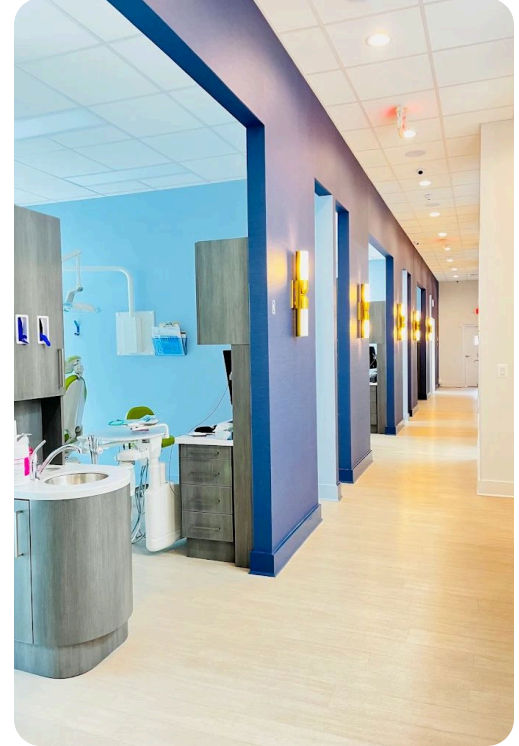
Career First Institute is a healthcare vocational training school in Lorton, Virginia, built on a simple idea: the fastest way to learn a clinical job is to practice it where it happens.

The Institute was founded in 2024. Our campus sits inside a functioning dental office. Classes meet when the office is closed to patients, so students have the treatment rooms, sterilization area, x-ray equipment and front desk to themselves.

In 2025, Career First Institute was certified to operate by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). We are proud to work alongside Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) as a community partner.

Serving Northern Virginia

Students join us from Lorton, Woodbridge, Springfield, Alexandria, Fort Belvoir, Burke, Fairfax, Lake Ridge, Dale City, Dumfries, Manassas, Stafford, Fredericksburg and surrounding communities.



Campus

9360 Richmond Hwy, Lorton,
VA 22079



SCHEV certified

Certified to operate in Virginia
since 2025



Real clinic

Training inside a working dental
office

Key Features of the Program



Train in a real dental office

Practice in actual treatment rooms with the same chairs, instruments and x-ray units used for patient care.



Hands-on from the first class

Every class includes a lab component, and 56 of your 80 hours are spent practicing skills.



Small groups, real feedback

Around five students per instructor during hands-on training, so you get coached, not just watched.



Evening and Saturday classes

Keep your job or family schedule. Choose weekday evenings or a once-a-week Saturday class.



X-ray certification preparation

Radiology coursework and review aligned with Virginia's dental radiation certification pathways.



Taught by working professionals

Learn from dental assistants with years of chairside, clinical and dental-school experience.



No experience required

Designed for career starters and career changers. We teach you from the ground up.



Career services

Resume and cover letter help, interview practice and job-search support as you get ready to work.

Program Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for admission to the Dental Assistant Program, applicants must:

**Be 18 or older**

at the time of enrollment

**Hold a diploma or GED**

a high school diploma or its equivalent

**Bring the drive to learn**

no prior dental or healthcare experience needed

Application process

There is no admissions interview. Three steps take you from interest to your first class.

1**Submit your application**

Complete the short online application at careerfirst.org/apply-today.

2**Complete your enrollment**

Our admissions team confirms your eligibility, walks you through the enrollment agreement and registration, and reviews payment options with you.

3**Pick your schedule and start**

Choose the evening or Saturday class that fits your life and begin training.

 **Apply today**

Talk to an admissions counselor

Want to know more before you apply?
Our team can:

- ✓ Answer questions about the course, schedule and training
- ✓ Share current tuition and payment options
- ✓ Arrange a campus visit so you can see the training space

 **Book a one-on-one** (571) 348-0109 admin@careerfirst.org

Schedules and Upcoming Classes

Same 80-hour program, three ways to fit it into your week.



Monday and Wednesday evenings

5:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Two 4-hour classes each week for 10 weeks



Tuesday and Thursday evenings

5:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Two 4-hour classes each week for 10 weeks



Saturdays

9:00 AM to 5:30 PM

One 8-hour class each week, with a lunch break

Upcoming class start dates

Seats are limited. Reserve your spot early.

Schedule	Class time	First class
Tuesday and Thursday evenings	5:00 PM to 9:00 PM	Tuesday, October 13, 2026
Saturdays	9:00 AM to 5:30 PM	Saturday, November 14, 2026
Monday and Wednesday evenings	5:00 PM to 9:00 PM	Wednesday, December 2, 2026

 [Reserve your seat](#)

 [Ask about dates](#)

Good to know

Start dates are announced at least one month in advance. Classes are not held on federal holidays, and each class begins once a minimum enrollment is reached.

Attendance

This is a short, hands-on program, so steady attendance matters. Missed labs can be made up with your instructor at a mutually agreed time.

Learning Path

Five courses build on each other, moving from the front desk and sterilization area into the treatment room and finally to dental x-rays.

Classroom 24 hrs

Hands-on lab 56 hrs

80 clock hours in total. The timeline below is approximate and follows the evening schedule. Curriculum may be updated to reflect current dental practice.

Weeks 1
Getting started

1

Administrative Assisting

The dental team, patient records and front-office flow

Weeks 1 to 2
Safety first

2

OSHA and Sterilization

Infection control, PPE and instrument processing

Weeks 2 to 6
The core of the job

3

Chairside Assisting

Four-handed dentistry, trays, procedures and patient care

4 parts

Weeks 6 to 7
Lab skills

4

Dental Impressions

Impression materials, techniques and stone models

Weeks 8 to 10
Imaging

5

Radiology

Radiation safety, intraoral and extraoral imaging, certification review

2 parts

4 quizzes

spread across the program to check your progress

Every class has a lab

skills are checked hands-on, and every lab must be passed

Certification review

the final classes prepare you for your x-ray exam

Course 1

Administrative Assisting

Meet the dental team, learn how a practice is organized and build the communication habits that make patients feel at ease.

What you will learn

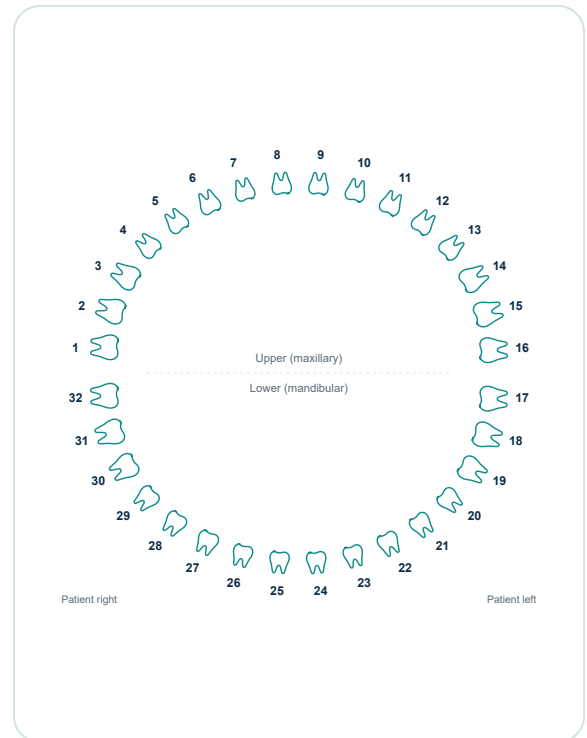
You start by understanding the dental assistant's place on the team and how the front desk, hygienists, dentists and specialists work together. You learn to speak with patients clearly, protect their information under HIPAA, and read the language of dentistry, including tooth numbering, tooth surfaces and basic anatomy.

In the lab

- ✓ Collect patient medical histories
- ✓ Explain treatment steps and obtain consent
- ✓ Work with dental practice-management software

Where it leads

Patients remember how they were welcomed. These skills help you support both the clinical team and the front desk from day one.



The Universal numbering system you will use to chart all 32 adult teeth

Skills developed

Patient communication

HIPAA and records

Tooth numbering

Dental anatomy

Office workflow

Course 2

OSHA and Sterilization

Keep patients and your team safe. Learn the infection-control and workplace-safety standards every dental office must follow.

02

What you will learn

This course introduces OSHA's role in the dental office, including the Bloodborne Pathogens Standard and hazard communication. You learn when and how to use personal protective equipment, hand-hygiene protocols, safe handling of hazardous materials and how to respond to and report an exposure incident.

In the lab

- ✓ Disinfect operatories between patients
- ✓ Clean, package and sterilize instruments
- ✓ Spot safety violations and choose the right fix
- ✓ Walk through real-world scenarios such as a needlestick or chemical spill

Where it leads

Sterilization is one of the first areas new assistants support, and it is a direct path to roles such as sterilization technician.



Skills developed

- Infection control
- OSHA compliance
- PPE
- Instrument processing
- Sterilization
- Exposure response

Course 3 Part 1 of 4

Chairside Assisting: Patient Preparation and Four-Handed Dentistry

Get the room, the patient and yourself ready before the dentist walks in.

03

What you will learn

Chairside assisting is the largest part of the program. It begins with preparation: setting up a clean treatment room, positioning the chair and light, and helping patients feel calm. You are introduced to four-handed dentistry and to the procedures you will support most often, including fillings, crowns, extractions, root canals and dentures.

In the lab

- ✓ Run mock patient check-ins and seat patients
- ✓ Take blood pressure and pulse
- ✓ Prepare the medical history for the dentist's review
- ✓ Identify common dental instruments and their uses

Where it leads

Anticipating the next step shortens chair time and makes you the assistant every dentist wants to work with.



Skills developed

Operatory setup

Patient seating

Vital signs

Four-handed dentistry

Instrument identification

Course 3 Part 2 of 4

Chairside Assisting: Tray Setups and Chairside Technique

The right instrument, in the right order, at the right moment.

What you will learn

You learn to build procedure-specific trays and to arrange them so the workflow runs smoothly. Then you move to the chair: passing and receiving instruments, keeping the field clear with high-volume suction, and communicating with the dentist without breaking concentration.

In the lab

- ✓ Assemble trays for common restorative and surgical procedures
- ✓ Prepare matrix bands and curing lights for restorations
- ✓ Practice instrument transfer and suctioning in guided simulations
- ✓ Keep infection control intact during setup and cleanup

Where it leads

Confident tray setup and instrument transfer are the skills interviewers most often ask entry-level assistants about.



Skills developed

Tray setup

Instrument transfer

High-volume suction

Ergonomics

Clinical teamwork

Course 3 Part 3 of 4

Chairside Assisting: Restorative and Preventive Procedures

Build precision with your hands on typodont models before you ever work on a patient.

03

What you will learn

This part focuses on the dental assistant's role in everyday restorative and preventive care. You learn the purpose of each procedure, the materials involved, and the steps for preparing and isolating the tooth and caring for the patient afterward.

In the lab

- ✓ Fabricate, fit and cement provisional (temporary) crowns
- ✓ Apply etchant and place sealants
- ✓ Place and secure a dental dam
- ✓ Practice coronal polishing and flossing technique

Where it leads

Offices value assistants who understand materials and isolation, because it keeps procedures on schedule and patients comfortable.



Skills developed

Provisional crowns

Etching and sealants

Dental dam

Coronal polishing

Dental materials

Course 3 Part 4 of 4

Chairside Assisting: Surgical Support, Post-Op Care and Efficiency

Step up to complex procedures and learn to work at the pace of a busy practice.

03

What you will learn

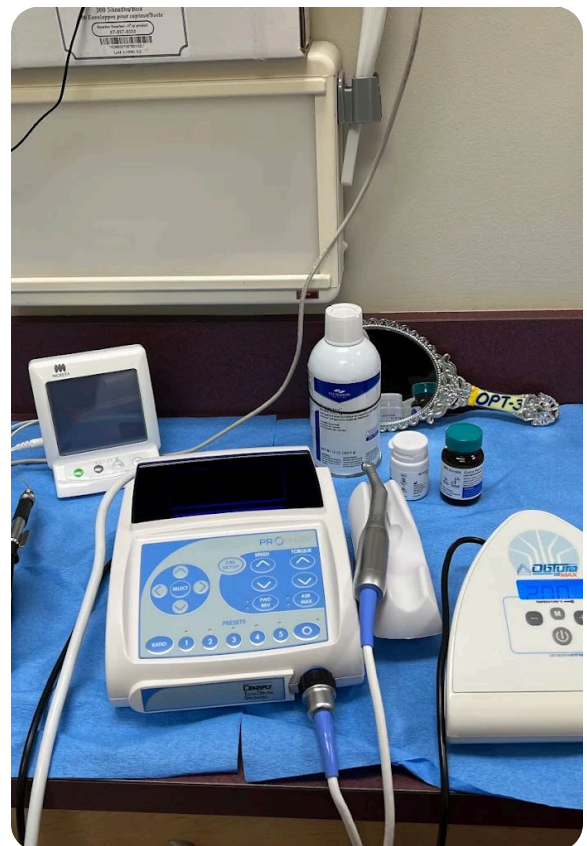
You learn how to support surgical treatment, including implant procedures, while maintaining a sterile field. You also practice what happens after treatment: removing sutures safely, recognizing normal healing and explaining aftercare so patients know exactly what to do at home. The course closes with ergonomics, timing drills and a full chairside review.

In the lab

- ✓ Prepare surgical and implant trays
- ✓ Remove sutures and deliver post-operative instructions
- ✓ Run timed mock procedures with peer feedback
- ✓ Complete an integrated chairside skills review

Where it leads

Graduates leave comfortable with the full arc of a visit, from setup to aftercare.



Skills developed

- Surgical assisting
- Sterile field
- Suture removal
- Post-op instructions
- Time management

Course 4

Dental Impressions

Capture an accurate record of the mouth for crowns, appliances and treatment planning.

What you will learn

This lab-based course covers the impression materials most offices use, including alginate and silicone-based products. You learn to select trays, mix to the right consistency, manage setting times and handle impressions so they stay accurate, then turn them into clean diagnostic models.

In the lab

- ✓ Take preliminary, full and partial arch impressions
- ✓ Pour and trim stone models
- ✓ Record bite registrations
- ✓ Evaluate impression quality and correct common problems

Where it leads

Impressions and models support crowns, dentures, night guards and whitening trays, and are a daily task in many practices.



Skills developed

- Alginate impressions
- Tray selection
- Model pouring and trimming
- Bite registration
- Quality evaluation

Course 5 Part 1 of 2

Radiology: Safety and Intraoral Imaging

Learn to take diagnostic dental x-rays safely and consistently.

05

What you will learn

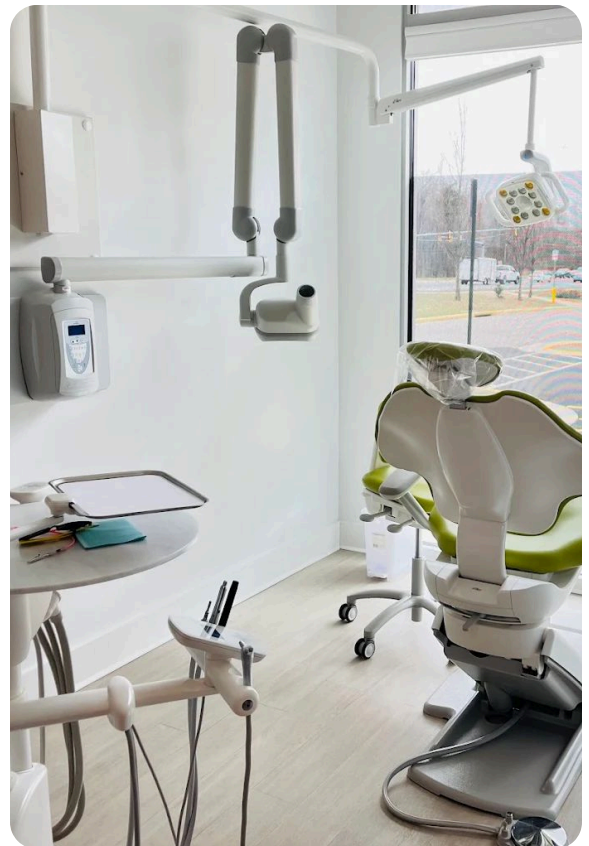
Radiology begins with safety: how x-rays are produced, how exposure affects the body and how to protect patients and yourself. You work with digital imaging and learn the purpose of each intraoral view, how to recognize key anatomical landmarks, and how artificial intelligence is starting to support diagnosis in dental imaging.

In the lab

- ✓ Capture bitewing, periapical and full-mouth series images on mannequins
- ✓ Use positioning devices and receptor holders
- ✓ Practice paralleling and bisecting-angle techniques
- ✓ Apply infection control during imaging

Where it leads

Taking x-rays is one of the most requested skills in dental assistant job postings.



Skills developed

- Radiation safety
- Digital imaging
- Bitewings
- Periapicals
- Full-mouth series
- Patient positioning

Course 5 Part 2 of 2

Radiology: Image Quality, Extraoral Imaging and Certification Review

Produce images the dentist can rely on, then get ready for your radiation certification.

What you will learn

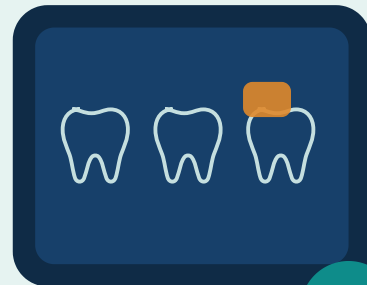
You learn to judge whether an image is diagnostically acceptable and how to fix what went wrong. You are also introduced to extraoral imaging, including panoramic, cephalometric and 3D cone beam (CBCT) concepts, along with the legal, ethical and documentation responsibilities that come with taking x-rays. The course ends with a structured review for the certification exam.

In the lab

- ✓ Troubleshoot exposure, angulation and receptor-placement errors
- ✓ Practice intraoral and extraoral imaging scenarios
- ✓ Review radiation-safety concepts and test-taking strategies

Where it leads

The radiology classroom curriculum follows the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) RHS exam outline as a guide.



Skills developed

- Image evaluation
- Error correction
- Panoramic and CBCT concepts
- ALARA principles
- Exam readiness

Skills Covered at a Glance

What you will be able to do by the end of the program.



Chairside assisting

Four-handed dentistry Instrument transfer
Suctioning Tray setup Surgical support



Infection control and safety

OSHA standards PPE Sterilization
Operator disinfection Exposure response



Dental radiography

Radiation safety Bitewings Periapicals
Full-mouth series Error correction



Impressions and lab work

Alginate impressions Stone models
Bite registration Provisional crowns



Procedures and patient care

Sealants Dental dam
Coronal polishing Suture removal
Vital signs



Office and professional skills

Patient communication HIPAA
Medical histories Tooth charting
Workplace readiness



Equipment you will train with

Dental chairs and operatories Intraoral x-ray units
Digital sensors Autoclave and cassettes
High-volume evacuation Curing lights
Typodonts and mannequins Impression materials

Meet Your Instructors

You learn from dental assistants who do this work every day and know what offices expect from a new hire.



Franklin Reid

Dental Assistant Program Instructor

Frank has worked as a dental assistant across the Washington, DC metro area since 2019 and holds a Certificate in Expanded Functions Dental Assisting from Fortis College. His chairside experience spans restorative, endodontic, surgical, implant and orthodontic dentistry, including clear aligners, pediatric sealants and crown lengthening.

He brings modern, digital-first dentistry into the classroom, with hands-on experience in CEREC and iTero intraoral scanning and in-house design and milling of crowns, night guards and retainers.

Expanded Functions DA certificate

DANB RHS certified

CPR and First Aid

HIPAA certified



Ruth C. Morales

Dental Assistant Program Instructor

Ruth brings more than 25 years of dental experience in private practice, corporate dental offices and dental education. For 14 years she supported student dentists in the clinics of Midwestern University's Dental Institute, working across general dentistry, oral surgery, pediatrics, endodontics and orthodontics.

Her experience covers x-rays, preliminary impressions, temporary crowns, sterilization, patient scheduling and special-needs dentistry. She is fluent in English and Spanish and is experienced with Dentrix, Eaglesoft and SoftDent.

25+ years in dentistry

Dental x-ray certified

CPR certified

Bilingual English and Spanish



All Career First Institute instructors hold a degree in their teaching area or have at least two years of professional experience in the field they teach.

The Career First Advantage



A working dental office, not a mock-up

You train in real operatories with the same chairs, x-ray units and sterilization area a practice uses every day.



More doing, less sitting

70 percent of program hours are hands-on lab time, with around five students per instructor.

Built for Virginia

The program prepares you for entry-level Dental Assistant I work and for the radiation certification Virginia requires to take x-rays.

Fast, focused and local

Ten weeks from first class to finished coursework, close to home in Lorton and convenient to I-95 and Route 1.

Flexible for real life

Evening and Saturday options let you keep working while you train.

Support beyond the classroom

Career guidance, references and job-search help as you move into your first role.



Career First Institute is certified to operate by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV).

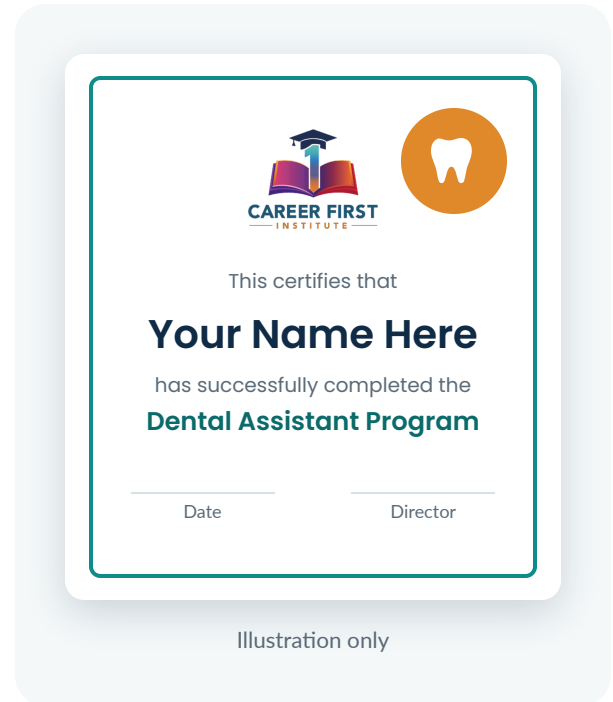
Your Certificate and X-Ray Certification

Graduates earn the Career First Institute Dental Assistant Program Completion Certificate.

To graduate, you will

- ✓ Maintain an average of at least 70 percent across the program quizzes
- ✓ Pass every lab
- ✓ Obtain the Virginia dental radiation certification

The completion certificate is issued by Career First Institute. It is separate from the Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) credential awarded by the Dental Assisting National Board.



Getting x-ray certified in Virginia

Virginia requires dental assistants to hold a radiation certification before placing or exposing dental x-rays. Our radiology course prepares you for either of two accepted pathways, and our team explains the options and next steps during the program.



DANB RHS exam

Pass the Dental Assisting National Board Radiation Health and Safety (RHS) exam. danb.org



NOVA radiation safety course

Complete the one-day Dental Radiation Safety course through Northern Virginia Community College Workforce.

Certification fees are paid directly to the certifying organization and are not included in tuition. Dental Assistant II is a separate Virginia registration with additional requirements.

Career Services

Training gets you ready. Career services help you get hired.

Job preparation is built into the program. As you learn each skill, your instructor points out how to describe it on a resume and in an interview, so you finish the program knowing how to present yourself to a dental office.



Resume and cover letter help

Share your drafts with your instructor and staff for feedback before you apply.



Interview preparation

Practice answering the questions dental offices ask and learn which skills to highlight.



Job-search support

Staff help you search and apply on platforms such as Indeed and LinkedIn.



References and recommendations

At an employer's request, receive a letter of recommendation or list faculty and staff as references.



Local connections

Guidance on reaching dental practices across the Lorton and Fairfax area.



Roles to aim for

Entry-level dental assistant, sterilization technician and clinical assistant.

Placement assistance is available to all enrolled students. Career First Institute does not guarantee employment, as hiring decisions are made by individual employers.



Start your dental career



Apply online

careerfirst.org/apply-today



Book a one-on-one

Talk with admissions



Call us
(571) 348-0109



Email us
admin@careerfirst.org



Visit us
9360 Richmond Hwy, Lorton, VA 22079



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www.careerfirst.org



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Program details, schedules and start dates are subject to change. Contact admissions for current tuition and enrollment information.