

COVID - 19 FAQ's

Employment Issues

Q. Where do I file for unemployment in Pennsylvania?

A. Click [here](#) to file an initial claim. You will want to have the following information ready:

- Address(es) for place(s) of employment
- Human Resource Manager or Contact person (Name, email, phone number)
- Last date of employment and hours worked during the last full week of work.
- Expected date to return if available

Q. How will I be paid while I am off work if I am employed at multiple offices?

A. The PA Unemployment Compensation information and frequently asked questions can be found [here](#). Contact information is available at the bottom of the webpage. Please refer to your government officials for employment compensation concerns.

Q. Can my employer deny me work when the office resumes practicing non-emergency and preventive care appointments?

A. Pennsylvania is an 'at-will' State. According to the National Conference of State Legislation (NCSL) At-will means "that an employer can terminate an employee at any time for any reason, except an illegal one, or for no reason without incurring legal liability. Likewise, an employee is free to leave a job at any time for any or no reason with no adverse legal consequences.

At-will also means that an employer can change the terms of the employment relationship with no notice and no consequences. For example, an employer can alter wages, terminate benefits, or reduce paid time off. In its unadulterated form, the U.S. at-will rule leaves employees vulnerable to arbitrary and sudden dismissal, a limited or on-call work schedule depending on the employer's needs, and unannounced cuts in pay and benefits." ([Reference](#))

For those RDH's who are under contract with their employers, you may not fall under "at-will" rules. A labor law expert would be best to identify your circumstance and legal rights.

Q. Do I have to use my Paid Time Off (PTO) or Vacation time before filing for unemployment or medical leave?

A. While we understand that this is an uncertain time for dental hygienists, each case is specific to your employment. The best way to get information and answers to your specific case is to consult a labor law expert who would be able to identify the best answer.

The PA Unemployment Compensation information and frequently asked questions can be found [here](#). Contact information is available at the bottom of the webpage. Please refer to your government officials for employment compensation concerns.

For questions about enforcement of labor laws please reference the PA Department of Labor website. The PA Department of Labor has a directory of services that is broken down by PA County. Click the link to find the appropriate contact information for your county [here](#).

Q. If I participate with my employer's health insurance, will that insurance plan still be active while I am out of work?

A. Your employer and insurance agent will be able to guide you in the best answer to any questions regarding insurance coverage.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and OSHA Concerns:

Q. What makes the N95 so significant?

A. There needs to be a seal around the mask or respirator to be effective against droplets and aerosols. Please view the short video [here](#) for further clarification.

Q. Do fabric, handmade masks protect against coronavirus?

A. NO. The CDC does not consider homemade fabric masks as personal protective equipment (PPE). Any PPE sold in the U.S. is required to be approved by the FDA before use.

Q. If my employer does not have the proper PPE's, can I decline work without legal ramifications? I am worried that my professional status would be negatively impacted if I decline to work under unsafe conditions.

A. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) violations fall under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Filing a complaint can be done [here](#). This form is not intended for emergencies.

Q. Who should I contact to report unsafe working conditions? Examples: reusing masks, not sterilizing handpieces between each patient, not having proper PPE such as disposable or fluid resistant gowns.

A. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) violations fall under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Filing a complaint can be done [here](#). This form is not intended for emergencies.

Q. What will Personal Protective Equipment (PPE's) look like and how will I be protected once I go back to work in the clinical setting?

A. The current guidelines can be found [here](#). No guidelines have been determined for "after" the pandemic at this point. We will post updates as soon as information becomes available.

Continuing Education Information:

Q. How will I be able to receive my live credits for courses that have been changed to webinar during the crisis?

A. Click [here](#) to view the CE requirements for Dental Hygienists licensed in PA. Live webinar courses are considered a live course provided there is capability to ask questions. Governor Wolf granted the Department of State's request to suspend restrictions on distance-learning for continuing-education requirements for certain licensed professionals including those under the State Board of Dentistry. We anticipate the State Board of Dentistry will be issuing a statement outlining specifics for licensees under their jurisdiction. Click on the [link here](#) to view the statement released March 22, 2020.

Additionally, Any Continuing Education questions can be sent directly to the State Board of Dentistry at: St-DENTISTRY@pa.gov