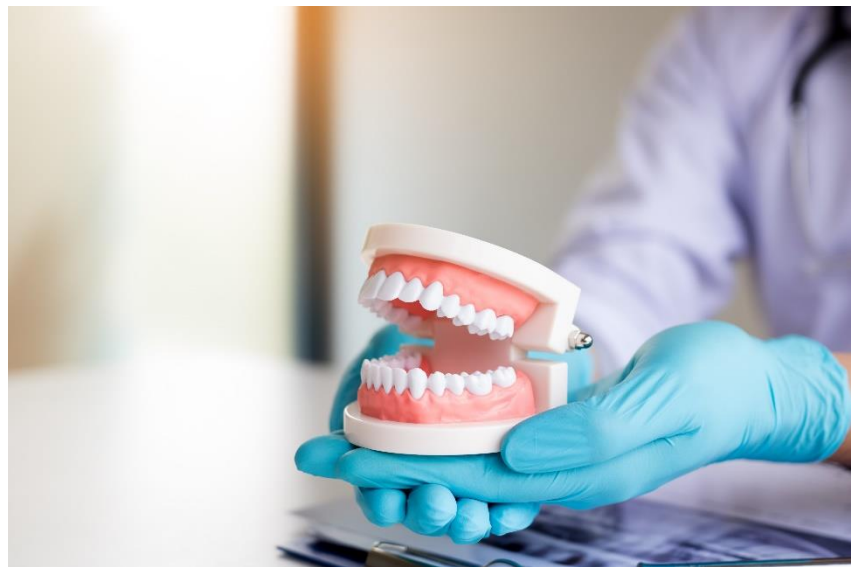
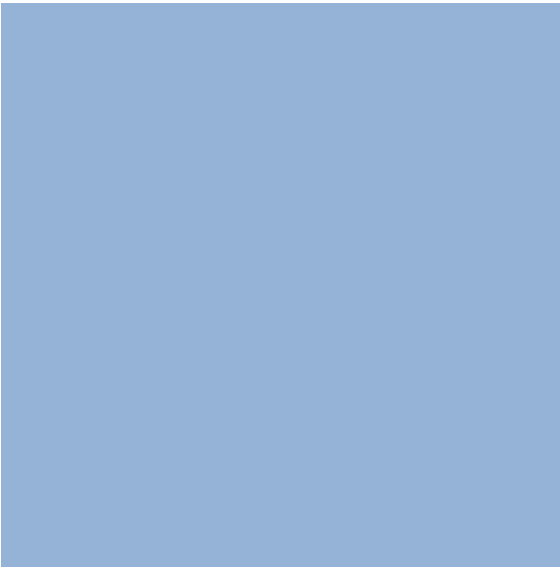
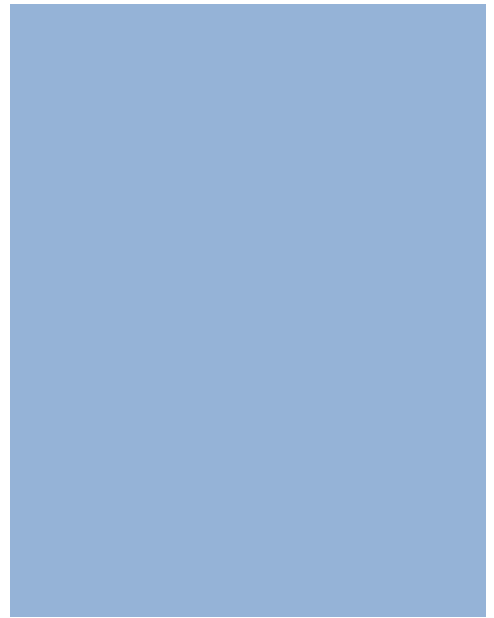


# Connection Opportunities

## Student Guide



**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT**  
*of* **HEALTH SERVICES**

**Division of Public Health**  
**Oral Health Program**

**P-03585**  
**(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 .....	2
Roles and responsibilities of student .....	3
Benefits for student .....	3
Wisconsin Oral Health Program contact information .....	4
Meet a Dental Profession Student .....	4
Activities for student .....	4
Meet a Dental Professional .....	4
Activities for student .....	4
Shadow a Dental Professional .....	5
Activities for student .....	5
Employment Opportunities .....	5
Benefits for high school student .....	6
How to get started for students .....	6
Meetings .....	6
Starting a conversation .....	6
Email template .....	6
Phone message template .....	7
Preparing for your first meeting .....	7
Talking points for your first meeting .....	8
Meeting discussion ideas for students .....	8
Evaluation .....	9

# 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. The WOHWPP is made up of Connection Opportunities, [Future Oral Health Workforce Day](#), and apprenticeship opportunities.

## 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 an individual 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 will take place 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 whether you are interested in a dental career or not.

## Making a connection

Individuals interested in connecting with a dental profession student or dental professional should complete and submit a [Connection Opportunities form](#). The Wisconsin Oral Health Program staff will connect you with a

dental profession student or dental professional based on the information you provide in your 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. The Wisconsin Oral Health Program will email you to notify you of your mentor match.
- 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. See the suggested activities and conversation topics below to guide you on setting up a meeting and what to discuss.
- 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](mailto: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 student**

- Receive guidance and support from a current student pursuing a dental or dental training program degree or a dental professional.
- Receive career exploration navigation from the Wisconsin Oral Health Program team.
- Learn more about the steps that need to be taken to succeed in a dental training program and as a future dental professional.
- Narrow down career interest.
- Begin building a professional network that you can rely on to write letters of recommendation (for scholarships, college applications, jobs, etc.) or serve as a reference.
- Set goals for the future with the guidance of others.
- Improve confidence and learn professional skills.

## Wisconsin Oral Health Program contact information

Please contact the [Wisconsin Oral Health Program](#) at [DHSOralHealthPathway@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto: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 look like and how often they will connect. A minimum of two meetings is encouraged.

### Activities for student

- Set a meeting and communication schedule that works for you and the dental profession student. A minimum of two meetings is encouraged.
- Determine best method of communication such as phone call, text or direct messaging, email, video chat, online meeting, in-person meeting, etc.
- Prepare topics to discuss or set a meeting agenda. Refer to the “Meetings” section on page six for discussion questions, templates, and topics to help you get started.
- Stick to scheduled meeting times without going over whenever possible.
- Maintain communication with the Wisconsin Oral Health Program by completing brief check-ins via email.
- 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.

### Activities for student

- Set a meeting and communication schedule that works for you and the dental professional. A minimum of two meetings is encouraged.
- Determine best method of communication such as phone call, text or direct messaging, email, video chat, online meeting, in-person meeting, etc.
- Prepare topics to discuss or set a meeting agenda. Refer to the “Meetings” section on page six for discussion questions, templates, and topics to help you get started.
- Stick to scheduled meeting times without going over whenever possible.
- Maintain communication with the Wisconsin Oral Health Program by completing brief check-ins via email.
- 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.

### Activities for student

- Set a meeting and communication schedule that works for you and the dental professional. A minimum of one meeting in addition to the job shadow is encouraged.
- Determine best method of communication such as phone call, text or direct messaging, email, video chat, online meeting, in-person meeting, etc.
- Set up at least one job shadow opportunity.
- Complete HIPAA training and forward verification of completion to dental clinic (see instructions below).
- Prepare topics to discuss or set a meeting agenda. Refer to the “Meetings” section on page six for discussion questions, templates, and topics to help you get started.
- Stick to scheduled meeting times without going over whenever possible.
- Maintain communication with the Wisconsin Oral Health Program by completing brief check-ins via email.
- Complete evaluation surveys at the end of the job shadowing experience.

Prior to job shadowing, all students must complete HIPAA training. Please access the “public-facing” training instructions from the University of Wisconsin-Madison by visiting [HIPAA External Training](#). At the end of the instructions, you will be directed to complete a training attestation to serve as verification of completion of the training. It will be emailed to you for your records at the email address of your choice. You are responsible for forwarding that verification to the dental clinic where you will be completing a job shadow. It is very important that all students understand HIPAA and confidentiality.

If there are any questions, please contact the [Wisconsin Oral Health Program](#) at [DHSOralHealthPathway@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto:DHSOralHealthPathway@dhs.wisconsin.gov) or the dental professional prior to your job shadow. Facility-specific paperwork may also need to be completed prior to your job shadow.

## Employment Opportunities

Employment opportunities will take place 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 high school student

- Receive real work experience in the dental assistant field.
- Receive guidance and support from dental professionals.
- Learn more about the steps that need to be taken to succeed in this in-demand occupation.
- Begin building a professional network that you can rely on to write letters of recommendation (for scholarships, college applications, jobs, etc.) or serve as a reference.
- Improve confidence and learn professional skills.
- Set goals for the future with the guidance of others.
- Improve communication skills.
- Learn about professionalism.

## How to get started for students

- Complete [Connection Opportunities form](#) indicating interest in participating in the YA program.
- Visit the [Youth Apprenticeship - Applicants webpage](#) and scroll down to the “How Do I Apply?” section for instructions.
- Talk with your school guidance counselor about YA programs.
- Review the [health science occupational pathway](#) to learn about the dental assistant profession.

## Meetings

Use the resources below as guides to approaching your first meeting or conversation.

### Starting a conversation

- Schedule an initial conversation with plenty of time to ask questions and converse.
- Describe what advice or guidance you’re seeking and for what purpose. Do you want to know more about what it is like to be a dental student? Are you interested in learning more about all the dental professions? Do you want to have conversations only or are you interested in a job shadow as well? Think about this and share what you’re seeking up front.
- Confirm your willingness to do the necessary work and follow-through. Make it clear to your connection that you’re ready to commit the time, energy, and effort to make the most of their time.
- Acknowledge and respect the individual’s time. Dental profession students and dental professionals are usually very busy and have demanding priorities.
- Be flexible when figuring out the best schedule for this connection opportunity. It’s important to make it clear how much you appreciate their consideration of your request.

### Email template

Dear NAME,



My name is YOUR NAME. *(Students can add “and I am currently a student at NAME OF SCHOOL”).* I received your information from the Wisconsin Oral Health Workforce Pathway Program’s (WOHWPP) Connection Opportunities program. I am interested in a career in the dental field as a PROFESSION(S) *(Add all that interest you: dentist, dental hygienist, dental assistant, dental lab tech.)* I would like to hear your career story and ask a few questions about your career path. *(If interested in job shadow, add: I would also be interested in an opportunity to job shadow.)* Could I ask for 30 minutes of your time over MODE OF COMMUNICATION *(phone, Zoom, Facetime, etc.)* to meet?

I understand you are very busy and if 30 minutes is not possible perhaps a 15 minute conversation is more manageable.

Please let me know some dates and times that work best with your schedule.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to speaking soon!

YOUR NAME

### Phone message template

Hello, my name is YOUR NAME. *(Students can add “and I am currently a student at NAME OF SCHOOL”).* I received your information from the Wisconsin Oral Health Workforce Pathway Program’s (WOHWPP) Connection Opportunities program. I am interested in a career in the dental field as a PROFESSION(S) *(Add all that interest you: dentist, dental hygienist, dental assistant, dental lab tech.)* I would like to hear your career story and ask a few questions about your career path. *(If interested in job shadow, add: I would also be interested in an opportunity to job shadow.)* Could I ask for 30 minutes of your time over MODE OF COMMUNICATION *(phone, Zoom, Facetime, etc.)* to meet?

I understand you are very busy and if 30 minutes is not possible perhaps a 15-minute conversation is more manageable.

Please call me back at PHONE NUMBER and/or email me at EMAIL ADDRESS and let me know some dates and times that work best with your schedule.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to speaking soon!

### Preparing for your first meeting

- Write a list of questions you want to ask and information you want to learn. Use the meeting discussion ideas below to help you form questions.
- Think about what you want to share with the dental profession student or dental professional. Why are you interested in this career path?
- Make sure you have a notebook or computer available to take notes.



## Talking points for your first meeting

- Provide some background about yourself and why you are interested in an oral health career.
- Define mutual expectations for length of conversation, method of conversation and how often you will connect.
- Consider the best method of communication. Do they prefer text, phone call, or email?
- Ask if there is any paperwork to complete for a job shadow if you're hoping to job shadow.
- Ask if there is any additional information they want you to know, before concluding the conversation.
- Thank your connection opportunity and set up any additional meeting dates and times at the end of the conversation.

## Meeting discussion ideas for students

Listed below are some sample questions the student may use as a guideline to ask the dental profession student.

- How do the courses differ from high school courses? Are they more intense?
- What is your schedule like? How much time do you spend in class, studying, participating in extracurricular activities, etc. per week? Is there a good balance between schoolwork and fun?
- What courses should I take my first semester?
- Are there any student groups you recommend connecting with?
- Is there someone who helps you choose classes and stay on track for graduation?
- How many years in school do you think it will take for this program?
- What is the homework like?
- What was the financial aid process like?
- What do you wish you would have known about this program before you started?
- What was the application process like for your program?
- Will I have extra time to work part-time?
- How did you meet people?
- Do you have any tips for studying for entrance exams?
- Is this program competitive?
- How did you choose your area of study or major? When did you decide on this area of study? Did you ever change what you wanted to study?
- What are the exams like?
- How is your program different from high school?
- Other than coursework, how are you preparing for a job in the dental field?
- What was most shocking about your transition from high school to your current program?
- What do you like the most about your program? What do you like the least?
- What made you choose this program?
- What is the average class size at your school?
- Do most students go home on the weekends or stay on campus?
- How can I get experience in my field now and/or while in college?
- What should I be doing now to be well prepared for a dental program?
- Ask if they would be willing to give you a tour of their campus.
- Look into the different settings your health profession of interest can work in (For example, public health, rural hospital, urban community health center, etc.)
- Ask if they can look at your college application essay or scholarship essay and provide feedback.

Listed below are some sample questions the student may use as a guideline to ask the dental professional they are job shadowing.

- What is a typical day or week like?
- What do you like best about your job?
- What do you like the least about your job?
- How did you become interested in this career?
- How much patient contact do you have?
- What facilities and locations can you work at? (For example, hospital, clinic, nursing home, health department, traveling, etc.)
- Do you do the same work each day or is there variety?
- Is your job fast or slow paced?
- What challenges have you faced in this career?
- How much schooling is required?
- How competitive is this field?
- Are you required to pass a test and become certified or registered before you can work?
- How do you stay up to date with continuing education?
- Is there a professional organization to offer support?
- Are there opportunities for advancement?
- What types of qualities should a person have to be good at this job?
- What is your schedule like? Do you work nights, weekends, and holidays?
- What is the career outlook like? What changes have you seen in your job? What changes do you foresee in the future?
- What advice do you have for someone thinking about pursuing this career?
- What other jobs or careers are like this one?
- Do you work with people in other health care professions?
- What role does technology play in your job?
- What are clinical rotations like?
- How do you maintain professionalism on the job?
- How do you balance your personal life with your work?
- Discuss the importance of cultural competence.
- Why is HIPAA so important and how can I make sure I do not violate HIPAA?

## 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](mailto:DHSOralHealthPathway@dhs.wisconsin.gov) with questions or concerns about the 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).