


Dental Credentialing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

IHS Division of Oral Health



This FAQ Sheet is for informational purposes only to provide an overview of this topic; for more detailed information on credentialing of providers, please review the IHS Credentialing and Privileging Guide at: https://www.ihs.gov/riskmanagement/includes/themes/newihstheme/display_objects/documents/IHS-Medical-Staff-Credentialing-and-Privileging-Guide.pdf.

What is IHS credentialing?

Credentialing is the process of establishing the qualifications of licensed healthcare professionals to deliver health care in Indian Health Service funded facilities.

Why is credentialing important?

The primary reason for credentialing is patient safety: Credentialing offers healthcare programs the opportunity to vet healthcare professionals to ensure that only those who are qualified to provide safe and effective healthcare are hired and retained by the organization. Credentialing of healthcare providers is required for organizations that are accredited by such accrediting bodies as the Joint Commission, the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care, CNV Healthcare, or other accrediting bodies.

As a dentist, have I been credentialed before?

Generally, dentists aren't "fully" credentialed to provide services unless they work as part of a larger organization (i.e., military, health departments, hospitals, etc.).

What are the components of dental credentialing?

- (1) Application form. Generally, the application form requires the applicant to describe their qualifications including degree, dental license, work history, and other questions. The application will also include questions about the applicant's ability to perform essential functions of the position, illegal drug use, loss or suspension of dental license, felony convictions, loss or limitations of privileges, and disciplinary activity by a peer group or organization. Each application is accompanied by a copy of the applicant's current professional license, current DEA registration, a curriculum vitae, and usually the face sheet of the applicant's current professional liability insurance policy.
- (2) Primary Source Verification. Once an application is received, seven criteria must be verified from the primary source because they identify the legal authority to practice as well as the relevant training and experience. These criteria are:
 - a. Valid license to practice – verified by contact with a state dental board
 - b. Status of clinical privileges at the hospital/organization designated by the practitioner – verified by contacting previous organization, if the applicant was indeed privileged at a facility
 - c. Valid DEA license – verified by contact with the DEA
 - d. Education and training – verified by contacting dental school and/or residency school
 - e. Board certification – verified by contacting specialty board, if applicable

Dental Credentialing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

IHS Division of Oral Health



- f. Current malpractice insurance – verified by contact with the malpractice carrier, and verification that coverage extends to clinic location where the dentist is volunteering or working
- g. History of professional liability claims that resulted in settlements or judgments paid by or on behalf of the practitioner – verified by a query of the National Practitioner Data Bank

What happens after I submit my application?

A credentialing clerk will review the completeness of the application and will request additional information if anything is missing. Once the credentialing file is complete, the file is then sent to a Credentialing Committee at the local hospital or ambulatory facility. This committee will make the decision to accept or reject an individual's application, and the applicant is notified of this decision and, if rejected, will be notified of any appeals process.

Is credentialing just a one-time thing?

No. Re-credentialing must be done every two to three years depending on the requirements of the accrediting organization. Applicants usually are not required to submit a new, extensive application form, but re-credentialing still does involve a query to the National Practitioner Data Bank, a review of any sanctions or practice limitations through the state dental board or through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid exclusions database, and peer reviews and recommendations for re-credentialing.

What is dental privileging and how does that relate to credentialing?

While credentialing looks at determining if an applicant has the credentials to provide dental services at the facility, dental privileges are those services that define the scope of practice for the dentist applicant. Dentists must complete a privilege request form and request approval to provide specific dental services for which they are qualified to provide. Specialty dental services such as dental implants, periodontal surgery, complex oral surgery, etc. often require proof that the applicant has had advanced training in those areas. Dental privileges are granted by the chief dentist of the facility, followed usually by the clinical director of the facility and/or the Credentialing & Privileging Committee.

May I work temporarily (for a week or less) without having to go through the credentialing process?

No. Credentialing is our way of ensuring that patients receive safe and effective care from qualified healthcare providers.