

Bloodborne Pathogens and Communicable Disease Policy

A work hazard of a clinically practicing dental professional treating live patients is the potential to be exposed to communicable diseases and bloodborne pathogens. Standard precautions represent a set of rules healthcare providers follow to protect themselves and their patients from pathogens spread by body fluids. Standard precautions aim to prevent the transmission of communicable and bloodborne pathogens through inhalation, direct contact, indirect contact, and sharps prevention. The South College Dental Hygiene Program enforces and educates students and employees on healthcare standard precautions so they may safely treat patients and be knowledgeable of disease transmission risk.

The South College Dental Hygiene program follows current recommendations from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Organization for Safety, Asepsis, and Prevention (OSAP), American Dental Association (ADA), and the American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) to protect all Dental Healthcare Personnel (DHCP). A DHCP, as defined by the Center for Disease Control, is any "paid and unpaid personnel in the dental healthcare setting who might be occupationally exposed to infectious materials, including body substances and contaminated supplies, equipment, environmental surfaces, water, or air".

South College Dental Hygiene program obeys the rules and regulations set forth by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Texas Department of State Health Services, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Department of Health and Human Services as they pertain to communicable diseases and bloodborne pathogens.

The South College Dental Hygiene program is committed to ensuring that each employee, applicant, student, and patient is provided with a safe and healthy environment. South College requires all students to have current immunizations, which includes the Hepatitis B series, to protect themselves and patients from disease transmission. Dental professionals are ethically obligated to safeguard the confidentiality of patient records and to maintain those records in a manner consistent with the protection and welfare of the patient.

South College emphasizes education for employees and students concerning communicable and bloodborne diseases and managing each case of disease transmission with sensitivity, flexibility, and concern for the individual. The college's decisions concerning a person who has a communicable disease shall be based on current and well-informed medical judgement which includes the nature of the disease, risk of transmission to others, symptoms, and special circumstances of the person, and balancing identifiable risks and available alternatives to respond to a student or employee with a communicable disease.

Students are strongly encouraged to undergo a personal evaluation with their medical provider to assess their own communicable disease status and risk prior to enrollment. No student will be denied entry to a program, required to cease attending the college, or participating in college functions solely based on diagnosis of a communicable or bloodborne disease. If a review of the

facts demonstrates a student is unable to perform, as required by the degree plan or presents a health risk to themselves or fellow community members, a decision shall be made regarding the student's attendance at the college. South College shall offer reasonable accommodation to both students and employees. Generally, reasonable accommodation will not require expenditure of additional funds.

The South College Dental Hygiene program has policies related especially to bloodborne and infectious diseases that include human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B (HBV), and other bloodborne infections. Persons who are seropositive for a bloodborne disease shall receive the same treatment as those who are seronegative.

Standard precautions are followed in the dental hygiene clinic to reduce the cycle of infection and eliminate cross-contamination, reduce the number of airborne pathogens, protect all patients and personnel from infection, and ensure the chain of infection is not broken. A patient infected with a bloodborne pathogen should be treated with compassion and dignity and will be provided access to dental care and treatment within the scope of practice in the dental hygiene clinic.