

Fellow Dentists of South Dakota,

As dentists in the United States today caught in the whirlwind that is COVID-19, we are facing unprecedented decisions that have the potential to significantly impact our families, our communities, our state, and our country. Many are torn about the appropriate response with regard to the continued operation of our practices, in light of the recently released recommendations from the CDC.

It is our firm belief that, as medical professionals at the highest end of the risk spectrum, it is our responsibility to make decisions based on the information we have available. It seems incredibly unlikely that COVID-19 will behave differently in our state than it has in other areas of the world. As such, it makes sense to learn from the suffering and loss that has already been experienced elsewhere, and use it in an attempt to minimize our local casualties. Right now, making the best decisions for our businesses may not equate to what is best for our communities. These are challenging, strange times that call for seemingly unfathomable choices.

It is vitally important to remember that we are doctors—trained to help people and entrusted to promote better health for our patients and our communities. Obviously, there are emergent dental situations that require immediate attention, and we anticipate that licensees will find a way to deliver this emergency care in a manner that will keep both patient and practitioner safe. As we assess which dental conditions are most urgent, it is important to evaluate the potential for death as a result of delaying treatment versus that which comes with potential exposure to, or transmission of, COVID-19. At this time, the CDC is asking us to delay all routine dentistry. As members of the State Board of Dentistry, we are asking you to look very hard at these recommendations and understand the magnitude of our decisions, weighing fully the risks and benefits of continued practice. We strongly believe that it is our social responsibility to do what we can to ‘flatten the curve’, and while we are painfully aware of the financial implications of this, we feel that it is imperative that we prioritize what is ethically appropriate. Doing our part to reduce exposure to the virus could potentially curb long term sequelae in the months to come.

The State Board of Dentistry continues to support the recommendations put forward by the CDC, and will continue to communicate new information to you as soon as it becomes available to the Board. As you know, this is a rapidly evolving situation. In its relatively short history, COVID-19 appears to have progressed through other countries—and now our own coasts—fairly predictably. Working with this information, logic dictates that heeding the recommendations of those with more knowledge, more research, and more experience, is vital to overcoming this crisis.

In our lifetime, there has never been a time when the importance of unity, both professionally and as a culture, was so abundantly clear. To those practitioners who have closed your dental offices we express our appreciation. To those who have not, we highly recommend that you follow the recommendations of the CDC and close your dental offices to all but true emergency procedures. Stay informed and make wise, measured choices to help keep our dentists, staff, and patients healthy so that we can return to work as soon as we are safely able to do so.

Below are links to previously emailed resources. We have also included a link to the Department of Labor COVID-19 employment resources. These links can also be found on the Board's website. Any recommendation or directive specific to the operation of dental offices from the SD-DOH as part of the overall COVID-19 mitigation effort will be conveyed to licensees as soon as it becomes available to the Board.

Rest assured that we are also working on licensing and related issues that have been created due to the current circumstances. We will work hard to find creative solutions to whatever challenges come.

Stay Well,

Tara T. Schaack, DDS – President  
Harold Doerr, DDS – Vice President  
Zona Hornstra, RDH – Secretary/Treasurer  
Amber Determan, DDS – Board Member  
Molly Fulton – Board Member  
Nick Renemans, DDS – Board Member  
Scott Van Dam, DDS, MD – Board Member

COVID 19 Resources:

- SD-DOH [COVID 19](#) website.
- CDC [COVID-19 website](#).
- CDC guidance on responding to [COVID-19 in dental settings](#).
- CDC recommendation to [postpone routine dental visits](#).
- SD-DOH has set up the following listservs for practitioners to receive updates. Please use the links below to subscribe. Once subscribed, you will receive information, updates, and teleconference information directly from the listservs:
  - Health Alert Network: <https://sdhan.sd.gov>
  - Epi (Epidemic) Listserv:  
<https://listserv.sd.gov/scripts/wa.exe?SUBED1=SDEPI&A=1>
  - Healthcare-associated Infections Listserv:  
<https://listserv.sd.gov/scripts/wa.exe?SUBED1=SDHCASSOCINFECTIONS&A=1>
- ADA [Coronavirus Resource Center for Dentists](#), which includes the recommendation that dentists nationwide [postpone elective procedures](#).
- Department of Labor COVID 19 [Employment Resources](#).