

COVID-19 Update: NDDA Board of Trustee Practice Reopening Statement

In this update we will be covering the following items which will be discussed at length below:

1. NDDA Board of Trustee Practice Reopening Statement
2. NDBODE Special Meeting Monday April 27, 2020 at 8:00am CDT
3. The NDDA Board of Trustees would like to provide the following comment to clarify our position

NDDA Board of Trustee Practice Reopening Statement

The NDDA Board of Trustees supports the independent clinical judgment of our member dentists to provide dental care specific to their patients and practice. Further, **the NDDA will advocate at the April 27, 2020 NDBODE meeting for the right of all dentists in North Dakota to practice dentistry using their independent clinical judgment specific to their patients and practice.** Further, prior to any member dentist providing any dental care in North Dakota, the NDDA Board of Trustees strongly recommends all member dentists review all American Dental Association COVID-19 Guidance including the “Return to Work Toolkit,” which will be released April 27, 2020.

NDBODE Special Meeting Monday April 27, 2020 at 8:00am CDT

On Monday April 27, 2020, NDBODE will be voting on whether to extend, lift or adjust their previous guidance of “dental practitioners within the state, to discontinue providing routine, non-essential, and elective procedures through the end of the business day April 30, 2020... During this time all practitioners must continue to provide patients emergency care.” **Extension, adaption or removal of these practice limitations could happen as soon as April 27, 2020.** All member dentists should be prepared for any outcome from this meeting.

If you feel strongly and would like to provide any comment to NDBODE for their review, we would encourage you to provide that comment to them in written form prior to the meeting. The contact information for the Executive Director of NDBODE is below:

Ms. Rita Sommers

Phone: 1-701-258-8600

Email: rita@niddentalboard.org

As the regulatory body charged with the protection of public health and safety regarding the practice of dentistry in North Dakota, the NDDA respects the guidance provided from our NDBODE. We thank them for their guidance not only for our members, but all licensed dental professionals within our state. The NDDA cannot represent any positions taken by NDBODE, but respects their decisions with regards to the regulation of the practice of dentistry in our state.

The NDDA Board of Trustees would like to provide the following comment to clarify our position:

As your Board of Trustees, we believe in the clinical expertise, education and judgment of our over 400 member dentists across the state of North Dakota and will advocate that any and all practice decisions autonomously flow from our member dentists. More importantly, all member dentists need to be thinking about what will be your “new normal” for providing dental care in our state. **At the NDDA, our number one priority always is and will be the health and safety of our dentists, your staff and most importantly your patients.**

NDDA Membership and dental offices across the state made the difficult, but correct decision, to limit care out of initial precautions due to this pandemic. While the initial limitations were valuable, the majority of dental treatment is now being delayed without any current timeline in which dentists can plan to resume care. **Further delay will cause further harm to patients.** In addition, those in greatest need of dental care are often the same patients with underlying health conditions that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19 complications. **Regular, preventative, and supportive dental care is an important part of maintaining their overall health.** We are substituting one health care crisis for another, resulting in more serious long-term effects.

Dental offices routinely manage the risks of infectious disease transmission and are capable of adapting to these new risks as highly trained experts in dental medicine. Potential encounters at dental offices also present less risk to the community because these contacts are well-documented and easily traced, unlike the random encounters at grocery stores and takeout restaurants. For the good of the community, we must now take steps to begin providing additional essential dental care.

The NDDA Central Office has provided and will continue to provide many “Reopening Dental Offices” resources to our membership for their review if providing care during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Membership have already received “[ADA Interim PPE Guidelines](#),” “[ADA - What to Do if Someone on Your Staff Tests Positive for COVID-19](#),” and coming Monday, April 27, 2020 the “Return to Work Toolkit.” **The NDDA strongly recommends all member dentists review all upcoming content, presentations, resources and guidance if they are providing any dental care through this pandemic.** Practices are encouraged to research and exceed standard infection control procedures and implement policies to minimize patients’ time and possible contact in the waiting rooms. The implementation of these protocols is at the discretion of each individual dentist utilizing their clinical judgement specific to their patients and practice. **If at any point, any dental provider feels it is best to limit or close their practice, the NDDA would strongly encourage the dental provider to follow their clinical judgment.**

Through our unified decisions and actions, we have signaled, and Governor Burgum has noticed, the proactive intelligent decisions and preparedness from the dental community to handle this pandemic.

Since the beginning of this pandemic the NDDA has been in constant communication and working with the State Health Officer, the North Dakota Board of Dental Examiners, the North Dakota Department of Health the American Dental Association and most importantly Governor Burgum.

As a result of our unified action, the NDDA will strongly advocate for the independent clinical judgment of our member dentists to provide dental care specific to their patients and practice. Further the NDDA will focus on and provide to members the most accurate and up to date health and safety resources when it comes to providing any dental care through this COVID-19 pandemic. **It is our intention that all NDDA members will keep up to date, informed and follow the highest health, safety and infection control standards.**

We are all in this together and want to thank you for your unified voice and effort through these extremely trying times. **Just as we have been unified, prepared and cautious in our response to this pandemic, we urge you to take this same cautious path when reopening your offices to care in North Dakota.** The NDDA’s number one priority at this time is getting you back to taking care of North Dakotans. We appreciate your support and adherence to the highest standards of care in our state.