



Observership Program For International Educated Dental Professionals (IEDPs) In Dental Offices & Clinics

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Objectives

There are Internationally Educated Dental Professionals living in Nova Scotia who are permanent residents in Canada and are currently pursuing their licence to practice dentistry in this province. Many IEDPs are preparing to take the NDEB examinations and/or are applying to the Qualifying Program. To prepare for the written and practical assessments, and ultimately to practice successfully and effectively in Nova Scotia, IEDPs need a solid understanding of the realities of dental practice here.

The Observership Program provides the opportunity for IEDPs to get first-hand contact with dental care as practiced in Nova Scotia. It is not intended to fill gaps in knowledge or dental training but rather to familiarize and acculturate IEDPs to the practice of dentistry in Nova Scotia including but not limited to day-to-day activities, policies and protocols, the dental care team, and the culture of the workplace.

Designed to expose IEDPs to the environment of dental practice in Nova Scotia, the Observership is a volunteer arrangement between an IEDP Observer and a Host Dentist. The program is highly flexible and the time frame may be customized to the needs and availability of the Observer and the Host Dentist. The program has been reviewed by the Provincial Dental Board, is promoted by the Nova Scotia Dental Association, advised by the IEDP Multi-stakeholder Work Group and operated by the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS).

Internationally Educated Dental Professional (IEDP)

An IEDP is an immigrant dentist who has graduated from a dental school outside Canada. The career goal of most Observership applicants will be to qualify for Nova Scotia licensure and work as a dentist in Nova Scotia, but others may want to use the Observership to explore alternative careers in related dental fields. It is also possible for internationally educated professionals in Dental Hygiene, Dental Assisting or Dental Technology to participate in an Observership.

Program Eligibility

To be eligible for this program, an IEDP must have:

- Graduated from a non-accredited university-based dentistry program outside Canada and have been licensed to practice in another jurisdiction
- Signed a confidentiality agreement
- Chosen to settle in Nova Scotia and be a permanent resident of Canada
- Have an employment specialist through ISANS

Host Dentist

The Host Dentist is a dentist licensed in Nova Scotia who is willing to provide an IEDP with an Observership opportunity for an agreed upon length of time. Accepting IEDPs into a dental practice is a rewarding experience. It will help the IEDP in his or her journey to obtain a license and at the same time can benefit the Host Dentist.

Guidelines

The Provincial Dental Board has reviewed the IEDP Observership Program, and Observers do not require a professional license to participate. The Observership requires a Host Dentist to have a license to practice dentistry in Nova Scotia. As Observers do not hold a license to practice dentistry in Nova Scotia, the Host Dentist may be held responsible for the actions of the Observer, should there be a complaint.

During the Observership, a Host Dentist is expected to:

- Provide a useful and positive experience for the Observer
- Maintain a professional relationship with the Observer at all times
- Ensure the Observer wears a name tag or is otherwise appropriately identified
- Request and obtain informed consent from each patient for the participation of an Observer in their upcoming appointment
- Ensure the Observer signs a confidentiality agreement and retains a copy in the office/clinic
- Ensure patients are agreeable to having the Observer present in the dental operatory

During the Observership, IEDPs are expected to:

- Understand and abide by the Provincial Dental Board Code of Ethics
- Understand and abide by the Personal Health Information Act of Nova Scotia: <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/phia>
- Dress and behave in a professional manner
- Maintain confidentiality and respect patients' rights
- Maintain a non-judgmental attitude toward patients
- Be punctual and abide by the agreed upon schedule
- Understand and respect the limitations of an Observership role

Confidentiality Agreement & Liability

During the Observership, the IEDP may attend dentist-patient interactions and will have access to private personal patient information. Maintaining confidentiality of patient information is essential, and the IEDP will be required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement.

The IEDP will be acting mainly as a passive observer at the dental office or clinic and will not personally undertake any tasks or work duties that would involve liability. Liability insurance will thus not be required for IEDPs.

Process for setting up an Observership:

1. Nova Scotia Dental Association promotes the Observership Program amongst licensed dentists and clinics and maintains a list of interested potential Host Dentists.
2. An IEDP completes an Observership application form. This is most often with assistance from their employment specialist at ISANS. The Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia requires the applicant to provide a current Criminal Record Check / Vulnerable Sector Search.
3. ISANS contacts the appropriate Host Dentist and forwards a request together with the application and resume of the potential Observer. An initial interview/meeting is arranged.
4. If both parties are agreeable to the Observership, program objectives, potential activities, length of time, frequency and duration are discussed and determined.
5. An Observership agreement is signed and copy held by the Observer, Host Dentist, the PDB and ISANS.
6. The Confidentiality Agreement is signed and copy held by the same parties.

Observership Activities

Throughout the Observership period, the IEDP may:

- Observe dental examinations and procedures.
- Review patients' files under supervision.
- Discuss dental practice and clinic management with the Host Dentist or other staff.
- Learn about and observe the professional roles of other dental care professionals.
- Research articles on dental questions needed for practice.
- Attend staff meetings.
- Learn about billing and filing systems, administrative procedures, policies and techniques.
- While under supervision view files, electronic documents, filing systems, documents and software programs.
- Attend networking activities and professional development sessions as available.

Potential Outcomes

For the IEDP

- The Observership Program will enable IEDPs to establish meaningful relationships with future colleagues in their profession, to reinforce formalized course-based learning and to provide direct experience of real patients in a professionally supervised setting.
- It will introduce IEDPs to the day to day practice of dentistry in Nova Scotia.
- The Program will facilitate the acculturation of IEDPs to dental practice in Nova Scotia.
- IEDPs will gain experience in the areas of relationship-building and culturally appropriate norms of communication with patients and other dental healthcare professionals.
- Through observation, IEDPs will become familiar with history taking, dental examination, diagnostic procedures, treatment planning and dental procedures required for competency in dental practice in Nova Scotia.

For the Host Dentist

- The activities listed above may enhance the practice of a Host Dentist
- The Host Dentist may earn up to five credit hours of Category 3 CDE per calendar year. The Host Dentist needs to provide verification of participation in the Observership Program in order for CDE credit hours to be recognized by the Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia.
- Host Dentists have an opportunity to learn about international cultures, dental care systems and clinical practices in other parts of the world, as well as to enhance their skills in interacting with a diverse patient base.

Recommended First Day Activities

- Before beginning the Observership Program an orientation session must be completed by the Observer.
- A brief meeting between the Observer and Host Dentists to clarify goals and expectations.
- The Observer should be introduced or introduce him/herself to the office/clinic staff and tell them why they are there.
- Make sure the confidentiality form is signed.
- Establish a confirmed schedule for at least the next two weeks.

The Observer should be given contact information for the dental office in case of last minute schedule changes.