

new dentist news



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Practicing IN A RURAL COMMUNITY

BY DAVID BURGER

Kristen Sciolino, D.M.D., practices in Lincoln, Maine — population 4,853.

As a dentist in a small, rural community, Dr. Sciolino said her family wouldn't have it any other way.

She is just one of many new dentists who have chosen to practice in a rural setting, whether it be in public health or at a private practice or dental service organization.

"The pressure and pace of life in rural areas is different from urban ones," said Dr. Sciolino, a 2020 graduate of the University of New England College of Dental Medicine in Portland, Maine. "My husband loves the small-town feel here and has been more relaxed than when we lived closer to a larger

city. I like to think our blood pressure has improved as well."

She found the practice that was right for her through ADA Practice Transitions, which linked her to Joe Thibodeau, D.M.D., who was looking for a successor. She purchased Dr. Thibodeau's practice in 2021 after working together for about a year after they were matched.

"I think the advantages of being a rural dentist is that the community knows you and trusts you," Dr. Sciolino said. "They bring their families to you and their friends. You become a part of the community in a meaningful and fulfilling way. I find fulfillment in knowing I am bringing access of care to people who need it."

Continued on Page 4

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'I love our mission'

NEW DENTIST SHARES WHAT SHE LOVES ABOUT PUBLIC HEALTH DENTISTRY

BY KIMBER SOLANA



Dr. Schoblaske

For Alayna Schoblaske, D.M.D., a dentist in a federally qualified health center in Medford, Oregon, there's been a lot to love with spending her first four years as a dentist working in public health.

"I love our mission. I love that I get to work with other dentists and learn from them," she said.

Before dental school, Dr. Schoblaske worked on the administrative staff for the nonprofit Teach For America.

"I saw how dentistry can impact a child's school experience," she said. "That's what really solidified my decision to focus on public health dentistry."

At Oregon Health & Science University School of Dentistry, she and other students started a free clinic and volunteered with the Health Equity Circle, an organization that seeks to address inequities in health care. She graduated in 2017 and completed a one-year general practice residency.

Those experiences, she said, helped prepare her for some of the challenges she faces in her public health career.

"A significant challenge is navigating financial decisions with patients," Dr. Schoblaske said.

Although the clinic offers a sliding fee scale for its services, cost barriers can still impact treatment decisions, such as choosing to extract a tooth instead of saving it.

At La Clinica, Dr. Schoblaske serves a unique demographic of patients; about 51% of her patients have Medicaid, and about 11% of her patients are experiencing homelessness.

However, many of the upsides outweigh the challenges. Along with the fulfillment that comes from helping underserved people attain better oral health, careers in public health dentistry offer benefits ranging from leadership opportunities to assistance in paying off student debt.

Dr. Schoblaske left dental school with \$280,000 in student debt. With an extended four-year commitment with the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program, she will receive \$140,000 in tax-free loan repayment.

Of course, Dr. Schoblaske said, the most rewarding benefit is knowing her work is increasing access to care.

"How cool is it that we get to help patients who may not have found help anywhere else?"

Dr. Schoblaske said. ■

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Practicing IN A RURAL COMMUNITY

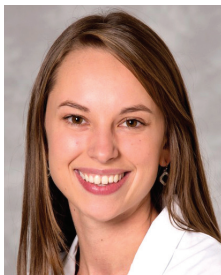
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Dr. Sciolino



Dr. Boynes



Dr. Sikora

She is also grateful to ADAPT for helping her find the perfect match.

Sean Boynes, D.M.D., is president of Dental Medicine Consulting and also serves as the science and research adviser to the American Institute of Dental Public Health.

He is a big proponent of dentists working in rural areas when they graduate.

“The rural environment allows dentists to tap into their inner-entrepreneur and to build a business from the ground-up,” said Dr. Boynes. “A young dentist would have a better opportunity to develop a personal brand that is meaningful. Beyond the fresh air and ability to pay off debt at a quicker pace because personal real estate, taxes and the overall cost of living is [typically] less, there is the ability to be that old-fashioned traditional dentist leader in your community.”

Dr. Boynes added: “There really is something to be said for sponsoring Little League sports, having your ad in the school newspaper and getting a good table with the best food at the local restaurant, [which can have] positive effects on mental well-being and happiness.”

Working in a rural area can also make additional financial sense, he said.

“There are now more ways to pay off student debt for rural dentists, as many states tackle dentist shortages with loan repayment programs,” Dr. Boynes said. “Many state agencies and national programs, like the National Health Service Corps through the Health Resources and Services

Administration, offer loan repayment in exchange for practicing in a dental Health Professional Shortage Area.”

Jessica M. Sikora, D.M.D., is another 2020 graduate of the University of New England College of Dental Medicine whose desire to

practice dentistry in a rural locale led her to use ADAPT to match with Shanna Gagnon, D.M.D., in Farmingdale, Maine (population: 2,995).

“I think there are many advantages to being a dentist in a rural area compared to a more urban area, with the most important to me being your interaction with the community,” Dr. Sikora said. “I love that where I work everyone knows everyone some way or another.”

Dr. Sikora grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania and always knew that she would prefer to work and raise a family in a similar situation. She said that ADAPT helped her find the perfect place for her to practice.

“This community was everything I was looking for,” she said. “I love that I live in an area where I know all my neighbors on the street we live on and that everyone is so welcoming and willing to help out with anything you need.”

Powered by the ADA, ADA Practice Transitions supports the future of dentistry by helping dentists buy or sell a practice, hire an associate or find a job. ADAPT matches dentists who are looking to join a practice with owners who are seeking an associate or someone to purchase their practice. ■

I think there are many advantages to being a dentist in a rural area compared to a more urban area, with the most important to me being your interaction with the community.



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5 things to consider BEFORE TAKING THAT JOB

Good news — you just received a job offer. Before you accept, you need to determine if the job is a good fit. Here are some questions to consider asking.

What will your responsibilities be?

Ask questions! How many clinical hours will you be expected to work? If it's 32, you'll likely put in 40 hours total doing treatment planning and other paperwork. What will the working hours be in relation to the hours the practice is open? For instance, if the practice is open late three nights a week and you were expecting more of an 8-to-5 schedule, this might not be the right practice for you. You may want the responses included in a written employment contract.

Speaking of employment contracts, what are some things to consider before signing?

Dentist employment contracts are legally binding agreements between a dentist and the dental practice. Among the questions dentists should consider:

- What is the length of the contract? Does it automatically renew?
- Is the position salaried or per diem?
- What are the benefits offered?
- Are there any limitations if the dentist leaves the practice? Is there a restrictive covenant in place?

The ADA has fact sheets — Dentist Employment Agreements: A Guide to Key Legal Provisions, Business Services Agreements with DSOs: What Every Dentist Should Know, and Compensation as an Employee or Associate Dentist — that are free to ADA members and available for download at ADA.org. To get appropriate legal and professional advice, the ADA recommends

dentists consult directly with a properly qualified attorney admitted to practice in their jurisdiction.

When was the last time the owner raised fees?

Before accepting a position in an established practice, it's a good idea to ask when the practice last raised fees. Ideally, ADA Practice Transitions recommends that practices review their fees annually to keep fees in line with the local market and avoid big price increases that deter patients. This is especially important for owners to do before bringing on a new dentist. If fees go up right after a new dentist joins, the dentist may be seen as greedy. The ADA Survey of Dental Fees on ADA.org helps dentists see how the practice lines up with other local practices.

Is there an ownership path?

In many cases, an associate-to-owner path can be a win-win for all involved: A growing group or an owner who is a few years from retirement mentors someone into the practice (in clinical and business skills) while the incoming dentist learns from an expert. Don't rule out practices just because they don't immediately fit your vision. And it's even better if you work in the space for a year to learn the flow of the place as you may discover a better layout or realize that the well-maintained equipment still has plenty of life.

Is there work-life balance?

Many new dentists are trying to balance their new careers with the responsibilities of a growing family. But sometimes small practices can be even more challenging, particularly those in rural communities where you may be the only dentist. Make sure to get a clear picture of what your typical workday will be like. Try and talk to as many people who work at the business as possible to make sure the environment works for you. ■



Dental practice OWNERSHIP RATES ARE DECLINING

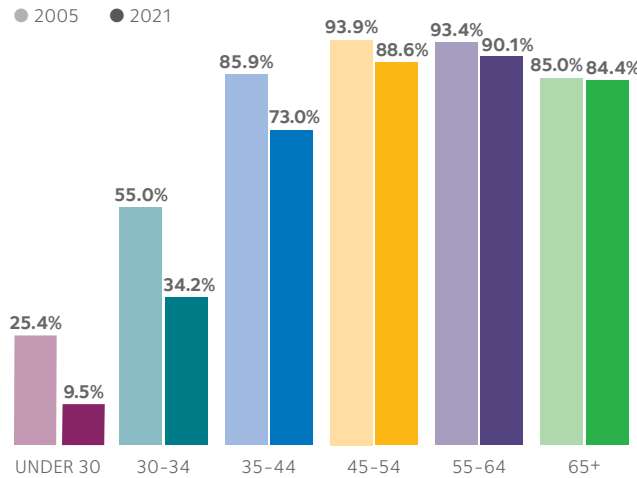
Dental practice ownership rates consistently skew toward older dentists. However, dentist ownership across all age groups has been declining since 2005. As of 2021, fewer than 1 in 10 dentists under age 30 are practice owners. In 2005, more than half of dentists ages 30-34 were owners of their practices, yet only one-third of dentists in that age group were practice owners in 2021. There are multiple factors that may explain why younger dentists do not own their own practices.

To see a full representation of these trends:



← SCAN or VISIT ↓
<https://bit.ly/3uVYft6>

DENTAL PRACTICE OWNERSHIP PERCENTAGE BY AGE, 2005 & 2021



In 2021, younger dentists were attaining ownership at a decreased rate compared with 2005.

Source: ADA Health Policy Institute analysis of Distribution of Dentists Survey and Survey of Dental Graduates.

Ask the Expert:

AM I FINANCIALLY READY TO GO INTO SOLO PRACTICE?

BY VLATKA PULJIC, CERTIFIED HEALTH CARE FINANCIAL PROFESSIONAL, BMO HARRIS BANK

Dear Vlatka: I've spent three years as an associate dentist and am clinically ready to go out on my own. I'm ready in my head to be the boss, but am I financially ready?
— Not Afraid of Big Steps

Dear Not Afraid: Like a lot of things in life, you may never feel 100% ready to take the plunge into practice ownership. Dentists who practice solo are responsible for much more than treating patients — it is the ultimate leadership opportunity. Here are some key considerations to help you prepare financially.

1. Save money

Start by setting aside money where you can. A great savings goal is 10% of your income. It may be possible to live comfortably on less to make your dream of practice ownership a reality. To lenders, your personal finances are an indicator of how you will manage your business finances.

2. Improve your credit score

Check your credit periodically. Banks generally require a minimum score of 680 as part of their credit-granting criteria. A financial professional can help you understand your credit report.

3. Pay down your student loans

If you are paying only the minimum on your student loans, make sure you're paying a bit toward the principal each month to reduce your debt.

4. Understand interest rates

A practice loan will be the primary vehicle for you to strike out on your own. Talk to potential lenders about how various rate scenarios will affect your monthly payments, particularly if you're being offered an attractive low introductory rate. A banker should be able to tell you at what point you can "lock in" your rate.

5. Know your monthly production

Your loan will also hinge on being able to demonstrate that you can repay your loan through production-driven revenue. If you can't provide a monthly production report, banks will use a formula to calculate it.

In the end, you can certainly achieve your goal of dental practice ownership. Remember that you won't be truly on your own — you can always go to your banker and other trusted professionals for business advice. ■

Since 2004, Ms. Puljic has worked with privately held companies to consistently deliver innovative, industry-specific financing and cash management solutions to meet their diverse needs. As the national director of industry programs for BMO Harris Bank, she leverages her background in commercial credit underwriting and structuring to add value, foster long-lasting relationships and — above all — help dentists realize their vision for practice success.

Editor's note: This article is provided by BMO Harris Bank, the ADA Member Advantage-endorsed provider for practice financing. Call 1-833-276-6017 or visit bmo.com/dentists for more information.



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