

PROPOSED PROGRAM SUMMARY

Institution: Murray State University
Program Name: Dental Hygiene
Degree Destination: Associate of Science

CIP Code: 51.0602

Credit Hours: 76

Implementation Date: 8/15/2025

Program Description

The proposed Associate of Science in Dental Hygiene program at Murray State University will prepare students to pass the National Board Exam for Dental Hygiene and the clinical board exams that are required for licensure as a Registered Dental Hygienist. The responsibilities of a licensed dental hygienist in Kentucky include scaling and polishing teeth, applying topical fluoride agents, placing pit and fissure sealants, providing nutritional counseling, exposing and processing dental radiographs, and educating patients in the proper care of their teeth and supporting structures. Upon graduation, students will be ready for licensure exams or be well situated to progress to a baccalaureate program in dental hygiene. Representatives from Murray State University and KCTCS met to discuss the proposed program, as well as the statewide need for dental hygienists. Future plans include development of additional KCTCS associate programs in dental hygiene, a possible baccalaureate program in dental hygiene at Murray State University, and clear transfer pathways between related associate's and baccalaureate degrees.

As a result of this program, graduates will be able to:

- complete and record a patient health assessment and identify the physical and oral health status;
- critically analyze assessment findings to address a patient's dental hygiene needs;
- solve problems and make decisions utilizing scientific literature as a basis for dental hygiene decision-making;
- assess, plan, implement, and evaluate community-based oral health programs; and
- provide dental hygiene services in a variety of settings.

Connection to Other Programs

Only three other dental hygiene associate programs exist in the state (Big Sandy Community and Technical College, Bluegrass Community and Technical College, and Western Kentucky University). No dental hygiene program exists in Murray State University's 18-county service region.

Student Demand

Initial estimates of enrollment are:

Year 1 – 8

Year 2 – 22

Year 3 – 28

Year 4 – 28

Year 5 – 28

Employment Demand

The projected job growth for dental hygienist is above average at the region (8%), state (7%), and national (9%) levels. Murray State University recently conducted a needs assessment by surveying 24 local dentists and orthodontists in its region. Dentists reported 16 open full-time positions and two part-time positions and that filling positions typically takes more than six months of searching. Overwhelmingly, regional dentists feel that a dental hygiene program at Murray State University is needed. Both the Kentucky Dental Association and the Purchase Dental Society confirmed the shortage of dental hygienists in western Kentucky and support development of the proposed Dental Hygiene program.

Budget

The initial start-up expenses of a dental hygiene program are high due to equipment needs, although Murray State University has received a \$1,000,000 grant to purchase 14 dental chairs and associated equipment. Three additional faculty members will need to be hired, but expenditures for the program will be covered by student tuition and fees.

Projected Revenue over Next Five Years (\$):	\$ 4,269,302
Projected Expenses over Next Five Years (\$):	\$ 3,954,750