



Dental Office Sedation and Anesthesia Care

Position Statement

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Dental sedation safe outcomes, as with all procedural sedation, are best achieved when provided by a healthcare professional, whose only responsibility is the sedation and monitoring of the patient, and a proceduralist whose specific focus is on the procedure.¹ Deep sedation and general anesthesia for dental procedures is safest when provided by a qualified, licensed anesthesia professional, who is not simultaneously engaged in the dental procedure.¹⁻³ When sedation or anesthesia services are required, the use of anesthesia professionals, with delineated responsibilities, allows each team member to focus on his or her role for best outcomes and patient safety.^{1,4-7}

Background

As an increasing number of patients of all ages and complexity seek sedation and anesthesia for dental procedures in office-based settings, it is important to keep patient safety central to the delivery of sedation and anesthesia services.³ Sedation and anesthesia for dental procedures may be administered to children, individuals with special needs, or adults due to fear, anxiety, or procedural pain.⁸⁻¹⁰ Sedation and anesthesia safety in an office-based setting is dependent on patient selection, sedation and anesthesia goals, techniques, vigilant patient monitoring, as well as the skills and competencies of the patient-centered care team.¹¹

Quantifying the number of procedures that involve dental sedation or anesthesia, either with or without an anesthesia professional who is not the dentist, is difficult. When safety and monitoring guidelines are followed, office-based dental sedation and anesthesia has a record of safe outcomes although the facility should have appropriate equipment and medications, supporting clinicians to be adequately prepared to address adverse events, should they occur.^{9,12-14} Challenges to the provision of safe sedation and anesthesia may increase with special populations, including but not limited to, pediatric patients, senior patients, obese patients with related airway issues, and patients with increasing health complexity. The complexity of care required emphasizes the importance of sedation and anesthesia provided by a qualified, licensed anesthesia professional, who is focused only on patient safety, monitoring, and vigilance.^{15,16}

Monitoring and Patient Safety

Sedation is a continuum that includes minimal sedation to general anesthesia.¹⁷ Each patient has a unique response to medications utilized for sedation and anesthesia. Therefore, moderate sedation may quickly transition to deep sedation and general anesthesia, affecting spontaneous ventilation and oxygenation requiring immediate intervention.^{3,11,17} When an anesthesia professional is available to continuously monitor the patient, he or she can focus on changes in the patient's condition and intervene as necessary in emergent situations. Equipment used to monitor the patient during sedation and anesthesia should be consistent with AANA *Standards for Office Based Anesthesia Practice* and other nationally recognized standards and guidelines.^{2,4,5,7}

Dental offices providing sedation and/or anesthesia services should be prepared with appropriately trained staff and have requisite equipment to manage adverse events and emergencies.^{4,9,14,18,19} Many state dental

laws contain substantial, important requirements regarding monitoring and equipment necessary for providing safe dental office sedation and anesthesia. All healthcare professionals who provide sedation or anesthesia services must be aware of the statutes, regulations, and standards (including accreditation standards, if applicable) that govern their licensure, facility and clinical practice.

Throughout the dental procedure, communication about patient status and airway management is of paramount importance as the dentist and anesthesia professional share the airway.¹⁸ Techniques and drugs used for procedural sedation and anesthesia should promote rapid recovery. Clear discharge criteria and instructions should be in place to support the patient's safe transition home.^{18,20}

CRNAs Working in Dental Settings

CRNAs possess the education, training, and skills to provide safe, high-quality, and cost-effective care as members of the multidisciplinary patient-centered dental care team in all settings, including dental offices. CRNAs practice in accordance with their professional scope and standards of practice, federal, state, and local law, and facility policy to provide dental sedation and anesthesia services.²¹ Dentists and oral surgeons often work with CRNAs in hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers to provide dental procedures. CRNAs are safe and effective anesthesia professionals who can also improve patient safety in office-based dental practices. In many states, there are currently barriers for CRNAs to work in office-based dental practices. As the need for access to safe, cost-effective dental services is increasing, dentists, oral surgeons and CRNAs have opportunity to advocate for CRNA full scope of practice to provide dental sedation and anesthesia.

AANA Resources

- [Standards for Office Based Anesthesia Practice](#)
- [Patient-Centered Care: CRNAs and the Interprofessional Team](#)
- [The Role of the CRNA on the Procedure Team References](#)
- [Documenting Anesthesia Care](#)
- [Patient-Centered Perianesthesia Communication](#)
- [Promoting a Culture of Safety and Healthy Work Environment](#)

References

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