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The Dental Hygienist's Guide to Temping in 2026

Understanding Staffing Agencies,
Temping Platforms,
Worker Classification,
and Independent Opportunities

**You built
this profession.**

*Now build the career
that works for you.*



MULTIPLE PATHS.
ONE PROFESSION.





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Welcome

Why This Guide Matters

The dental staffing landscape has changed significantly. More hygienists are exploring temporary work — to supplement income, gain schedule flexibility, transition between positions, or build an entirely independent career. At the same time, more platforms, agencies, and staffing models have entered the market, each with different structures, compensation models, and legal classifications. Understanding your options is not just helpful — it is essential.

Four Common Paths to Temporary Dental Hygiene Work

01

Local Staffing Agencies

Regionally operated, hire hygienists as W-2 employees and place them in local dental offices.

02

National W-2 Platforms

App-based companies operating nationally, classifying hygienists as W-2 employees with flexible shift selection.

03

Marketplace / 1099 Models

Platforms where hygienists operate as independent contractors, setting their own rates with self-managed taxes.

04

Independent Temping Business

Hygienists who build direct relationships with practices — no agency, no platform, maximum control.

Important Information

Please Read Before Continuing

■ ■ Educational Purposes Only

This guide does not constitute legal, tax, employment, or financial advice. It is intended solely as an educational resource for dental hygienists exploring temporary work options. Always verify information directly with agencies, platforms, and qualified professionals before making employment or financial decisions.

What May Change Over Time

- Staffing platform classifications, pay structures, and terms of service change regularly
- State laws governing worker classification and dental hygiene scope of practice vary and evolve
- IRS guidelines and enforcement priorities related to worker classification may shift
- New platforms may emerge and existing platforms may discontinue or restructure their models
- Agency policies, compensation structures, and geographic availability change over time

Verify Directly

Before accepting any temporary assignment, verify all terms directly with the agency, platform, or dental practice. Consult a licensed attorney, CPA, or qualified tax professional for guidance specific to your situation and state.

Need Help Understanding W-2 vs. 1099?

Visit the Dental Hygiene Boss Resource Center for educational guidance, IRS resources, and worker classification tools designed specifically for dental hygienists.

[\[VISIT THE W-2 vs. 1099 RESOURCE CENTER\]](#)

The Four Common Paths

Understanding Each Temping Model

Dental hygienists have more temping options in 2026 than ever before. Each pathway has a distinct structure, treatment, and level of autonomy. Review each carefully before committing to a platform or arrangement. tax

01

Local Agencies

Agencies hire you as a W-2 employee and place you in local dental offices. They handle payroll, taxes, and scheduling.

Potential benefits:

Tax withholding handled; workers' comp provided; lower admin burden; local office knowledge.

Potential considerations:

Agency sets your rate; less control over placement; possible exclusivity requirements.

02

National Platforms

App-based platforms operating nationally that classify hygienists as W-2 employees with flexible shift selection.

Potential benefits:

Broad geographic reach; taxes withheld; workers' comp included; same-day pay options on some platforms.

Potential considerations:

Shift availability varies by market; rate negotiation limited; platform policies may change.

03

Marketplace / 1099

Digital platforms where hygienists operate as independent contractors with greater rate flexibility and autonomy.

Potential benefits:

Potential to negotiate higher rates; multiple platforms simultaneously; business expense deductions may apply.

Potential considerations:

Self-employment tax (~15.3%); must carry own insurance; quarterly estimated taxes required; higher admin burden.

04

Go Independent

Building direct relationships with practices without any agency or platform intermediary.

Potential benefits:

Maximum rate control; no platform fees; long-term relationships; full professional autonomy.

Potential considerations:

Requires self-marketing, invoicing, insurance, and tax management; no built-in assignment pipeline.

Path 01: Local Staffing Agencies

W-2 Employment with Regional Expertise

Local dental staffing agencies are regionally operated businesses that have served the dental workforce for decades. They hire hygienists directly as W-2 employees and place them in dental offices across a defined geographic area.

How It Works

- Complete an onboarding process and submit credentials and references
- Agency adds you to their available pool of temp professionals
- Placement coordinators contact you when offices need coverage matching your skills
- Agency handles payroll, tax withholding, workers' comp, and scheduling
- You are paid as a W-2 employee of the agency — not the dental office

Potential Benefits

- Taxes withheld automatically — no quarterly estimated payments required
- Workers' compensation and liability coverage typically provided
- Local coordinators may develop knowledge of area practices
- Lower administrative burden compared to 1099 arrangements

Potential Considerations

- Agency sets your pay rate — limited ability to negotiate directly
- Geographic availability varies — not every market has active local agencies
- Some agencies require exclusivity or include non-compete provisions
- Less control over which specific offices you are placed in

Path 02: National W-2 Staffing Platforms

App-Based Flexibility with Employee Protections

National W-2 platforms represent a newer category of dental staffing that has grown significantly. These companies operate through mobile apps, connecting hygienists with dental offices nationwide while classifying them as W-2 employees.

How It Works

- Create a profile and verify credentials through the platform
- Browse available shifts posted by dental offices in your area
- Accept shifts based on your schedule — directly through the app
- Platform serves as employer of record and processes payroll
- Many offer same-day or next-day pay access

Potential Benefits

- W-2 classification — taxes withheld, employer pays half of FICA
- Workers' compensation and professional liability often included
- Broad geographic coverage in participating markets
- Transparent shift selection with office details visible before accepting
- Some platforms offer access to benefits or continuing education

Potential Considerations

- Platform availability and shift volume varies significantly by market
- Pay rates set by platform — limited negotiation
- Platform policies and classification practices may change over time
- You are employed by the platform, not the dental office

Path 03: Marketplace & 1099-Style Opportunities

Independent Contractor Platforms

Marketplace platforms connect dental hygienists with dental offices while classifying the hygienist as an independent contractor (1099). These platforms typically offer greater rate flexibility and autonomy in exchange for higher administrative and tax responsibility.

How It Works

- Create a profile and set your preferred hourly rate
- Browse and accept shifts — often negotiating rate directly with the office
- Work simultaneously across multiple platforms in many cases
- Platform facilitates the connection and payment transaction
- You operate as a self-employed independent contractor

Potential Benefits

- Potential to negotiate higher hourly rates
- Greater flexibility in schedule and client selection
- Freedom to work across multiple platforms simultaneously
- Business-related expenses may be deductible — consult a tax professional

Potential Considerations

- Responsible for full self-employment tax (approximately 15.3%)
- Must maintain own professional liability and occupational accident insurance
- Quarterly estimated tax payments typically required
- Higher administrative burden: invoicing, tracking, insurance management
- No employer-provided workers' compensation coverage

■ ■ Classification Note

The question of whether working through these platforms truly meets the IRS definition of independent contractor status is nuanced and depends on the facts and circumstances of the specific relationship. Consult a qualified tax or employment professional for guidance on your individual situation.

Looking for Current Temping Resources?

The dental staffing landscape changes frequently. Visit our Temping Resource Directory for an updated list of staffing agencies, national platforms, and marketplace resources.

[\[VIEW THE TEMPING RESOURCE DIRECTORY\]](#)

Path 04: Building Your Own Independent Temping Business

Maximum Control. Maximum Responsibility.

Some hygienists choose to build direct relationships with dental practices entirely on their own — without any agency or platform intermediary. When done well, this approach offers the highest degree of professional autonomy and earning potential available in temporary dental hygiene work.

Key Steps to Get Started

1. Define your rate and availability

Determine your target hourly rate, preferred days, geographic range, and any specialties or preferences.

2. Build your professional marketing materials

Create a clean résumé, professional profile, and brief introduction you can share with offices.

3. Identify target practices

Research dental offices in your area. Consider practice type, patient population, and proximity.

4. Make direct contact

Reach out professionally by phone, email, or in person. Introduce yourself and your availability.

5. Establish written agreements

Always confirm rate, date, hours, and cancellation terms in writing before any assignment.

6. Manage your business obligations

Maintain insurance, track income and expenses, and work with a CPA on quarterly estimated taxes.

BO\$\$ TIP

The Dental Hygiene Boss provides educational resources specifically designed to help hygienists build independent temping businesses — including rate setting, practice outreach, contracts, and tax preparation guidance. Visit thedentalhygieneboss.com to learn more.

W-2 vs. 1099: What You Need to Know

Worker Classification Overview

Your worker classification affects your taxes, legal protections, insurance obligations, and professional rights. This section provides a general educational overview only. Classification is a legal and tax matter — verify your specific situation with qualified professionals.

W-2 Employee	1099 Independent Contractor
Taxes Employer withholds federal and state income taxes from your paycheck	Taxes No withholding — you pay estimated taxes quarterly
FICA Employer pays half of Social Security and Medicare taxes	FICA You pay full self-employment tax — approximately 15.3%
Tax form Receive Form W-2 at year-end	Tax form Receive Form 1099-NEC if paid \$600 or more
Workers' comp Covered by the employer's workers' compensation policy	Workers' comp You must obtain your own coverage
Benefits May have access to employer-provided benefits	Deductions Business-related expenses may be deductible — consult a CPA
Admin burden Lower — payroll managed by employer	Admin burden Higher — invoicing, tracking, insurance management
Protections Employment law protections generally apply	Protections Many employment law protections do not apply

Worker Classification Reminder

Classification is determined by the overall facts and circumstances of the working relationship — not simply by what the agreement calls it. When in doubt, consult a qualified tax or employment attorney.

Want a deeper dive? For a deeper look at worker classification factors and IRS guidance, visit the Dental Hygiene Boss [W-2 vs. 1099 Resource Center](#).

IRS Worker Classification Snapshot

Behavioral Control · Financial Control · Type of Relationship

The IRS uses three broad categories of factors to evaluate worker classification. No single factor is determinative — all facts and circumstances are considered together. For educational purposes only.

01 BEHAVIORAL CONTROL

Does the company control how the worker does the job?

Key factors: instructions on when, where, and how to work; training provided; degree of oversight during the work.

■ Indicators of employee status

Office dictates the schedule, requires specific clinical protocols, directs how procedures must be performed, and provides supervision or approval before proceeding.

■ Indicators of contractor status

Worker controls the method and means of completing the work. Minimal day-to-day direction; no required training; worker determines how to achieve results.

02 FINANCIAL CONTROL

Does the company control the business aspects of the job?

Key factors: opportunity for profit or loss; whether the worker is available to provide services to multiple clients or businesses; method of payment.

■ Indicators of employee status

Worker is paid by the hour with no opportunity for profit or loss; worker provides services exclusively to one business and is not marketing services to others.

■ Indicators of contractor status

Worker can profit or incur a loss based on how the work is managed; provides services to multiple clients simultaneously; sets own rates independently.

03 TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP

What is the nature of the overall working relationship?

Key factors: written contracts; whether benefits are offered; permanency of the relationship; whether work is integral to the business.

■ Indicators of employee status

Benefits provided (health, PTO, retirement); relationship is ongoing with no defined end date; work performed is central to the business's core operations.

■ Indicators of contractor status

Project-based with defined scope or end date; no benefits provided; worker not integrated into day-to-day operations; serves multiple clients.

“Worker classification is determined by the overall relationship between the parties, based on all facts and circumstances.”

Want a deeper dive? For a deeper look at worker classification factors and IRS guidance, visit the Dental Hygiene Boss [W-2 vs. 1099 Resource Center](#).

Questions to Ask Before Accepting a Temp Assignment

Page 11 · Interactive Checklist — Check items as you complete them

Use this checklist before every temp assignment. Check each box once you have received a clear answer. Do not accept an assignment with unresolved items in the Compensation & Cancellation or Classification sections.

Assignment Details

- ☐ What is my worker classification for this assignment?
- ☐ How and when will I be paid?
- ☐ Is there a written agreement or assignment confirmation?
- ☐ What are the office hours and expected arrival time?
- ☐ What software and charting system does the office use?
- ☐ Who will be my point of contact if issues arise?

Clinical Expectations

- ☐ What is the typical appointment length for adult prophylaxis patients?
- ☐ Will I be expected to perform scaling and root planing (SRP)?
- ☐ Will I be seeing periodontal maintenance patients?
- ☐ Will I be expected to administer local anesthesia?
- ☐ Will I have a dedicated dental assistant or hygiene assistant?
- ☐ Are radiographs taken by the hygienist or another team member?
- ☐ What clinical protocols or workflows should I know before arriving?

Compensation & Cancellation Policies

- ☐ What happens if the office cancels before my shift?
- ☐ What happens if multiple patients cancel or fail to show?
- ☐ If the schedule falls apart, will I still be paid for the full day?
- ☐ Could I be asked to leave early if patient volume is low?
- ☐ Is there a minimum guaranteed number of hours?
- ☐ Are there cancellation fees or compensation protections for the hygienist?
- ☐ Who should I contact if there is a scheduling issue on the day of the assignment?

Practice Operations

- ☐ Is this a one-time assignment or could future opportunities be available?
- ☐ Are there specific production or treatment expectations for the day?

- Will I have time for chart review, notes, and patient education?
 - Who should I contact if I am running late or encounter an emergency?
-

Helpful Resources

Educational tools and directories for dental hygienists

The following resources are maintained on The Dental Hygiene Boss website. Information changes frequently — always verify directly.



Temping Resource Directory

Explore staffing agencies, national platforms, marketplace opportunities, and additional resources for dental hygienist temp work.

[\[VIEW DIRECTORY\]](#)



W-2 vs. 1099 Resource Center

Educational guidance and worker classification resources designed specifically for dental hygienists navigating today's workforce.

[\[LEARN MORE\]](#)



Career Opportunity Directory

Connect with dental practices seeking temporary, part-time, and permanent dental hygiene professionals. Explore available opportunities in your area.

[\[EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES\]](#)

You built this profession.

Now build the career that works for you.

Whether you choose a staffing agency, a national platform, or go completely independent — understanding your options is the first step. The Dental Hygiene Boss is here to help.

→ thedentalhygieneboss.com