



# Connecticut State Dental Association

## Message from the President

*March 31, 2020*

Dear Valued Members,

Good day all, and I hope this email finds you all safe and well. We are now two weeks into the Connecticut COVID-19 crisis and one week into the practice of evaluating and treating emergencies/urgencies/social distancing. While it has only been two weeks, it seems like forever and a day, but a lot has happened in that short time. I would like to take a moment and review some of the details on how we got to this point, and also to share with you some additional updates.

Here are some of the critical events that have occurred over the course of the past few weeks that bring us to where we currently are; starting with the most recent activities:

- On March 27th, the CDC issued interim infection prevention and control guidance for Dental Settings during the COVID-19 response. They have also recommended that dentists postpone elective procedures, surgeries and non-urgent dental visits. Services should be limited to urgent and emergency visits only during this period of the pandemic. [You can find the latest CDC guidelines here.](#)
- On March 23rd, the CSDA Board of Governors revisited and revised its original position statement regarding dental practice during the COVID-19 public health crisis, in order to strengthen its recommendations and clarify its intent. The CSDA Board of Governors **unanimously approved the following resolution:**

**Resolved**, that the CSDA Board of Governors strongly urges that Connecticut dentists cancel all elective procedures, and only provide emergency/urgent care as defined by the American Dental Association; be it further

**Resolved**, that in support of Governor Lamont's "Stay Safe, Stay Home" executive order effective 8:00 p.m. March 23, 2020, we are extending this strong recommendation to April 22, 2020, unless modified, extended or terminated by the Governor; be it further

**Resolved**, that not complying with these recommendations may be considered a violation of the [ADA's Principles of Ethics & Code of Professional Conduct](#).

- On March 20, Governor Lamont signed the “Stay Safe, Stay at Home” executive order directing all non-essential businesses and not-for-profit entities in Connecticut to prohibit all in-person functions. The order excludes any essential business or entity providing essential services or functions; ***Dentists are defined as essential businesses.***
- On March 19, the ADA issued guidelines on what to consider dental emergencies and nonemergency dental care. The CSDA has provided the information to our members, and has posted the document on our website at [www.csda.com/coronavirus](http://www.csda.com/coronavirus).
- On March 17, the CT Department of Public Health sent a letter to all licensed dental providers asking them to take the ADA’s recommendations into consideration and postpone all elective procedures. [Click here to read the DPH Letter.](#)
- On March 16, the CSDA Board of Governors convened an emergency conference call and approved the following resolution:  
**The CSDA Board of Governors recommends that Connecticut dentists consider posting elective and routine care for two weeks starting March 18, 2020.**
- On March 16, the [ADA recommends dentists nationwide to postpone elective procedures](#) for the next three weeks.

The CSDA’s updated policy statement/resolution from March 23, 2020 was also shared with the Department of Public Health; they are aware of the CSDA’s intent that dental offices should only provide urgent/emergency care services. The CSDA’s position statement is congruent with the timelines put forth in the Governors executive order and aligns with the stance of the UCONN School of Dental Medicine. Likewise, it is specific to following the ADA and CDC guidelines apropos to treating patients during the COVID-19 crisis.

## Legislative Updates

Please permit me to now provide you an update on a variety of legislative issues. First and foremost, be advised that due to the coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 legislative session has come to a halt. The Capitol and Legislative Office Building have been closed since March 12th, which means that no legislative business is getting done. Nonetheless, government governs via Executive Orders by the Governor. Furthermore, this year is a short legislative session and constitutionally the Legislature must adjourn by midnight on May 6th. We have heard they may just gavel in and gavel out to end the 2020 session and convene a special session sometime in June. This is just a rumor and we will keep you updated as we learn more from the Legislative Leaders in the future. In the absence of any legislative activity, the following member issues have been addressed by our Government Relations Director and lobbying firm, with anyone in government who would listen to them.

These issues, in no specific order, include but are not limited to the following:

### **Business Interruption Insurance**

We have learned that the New Jersey Dental Association and the Massachusetts Dental Society have introduced legislation that would require certain insurance companies in their state to provide business interruption insurance coverage to their insured parties in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic. A few of our members have asked us about this. Unfortunately, because our Legislature is closed, there is no means to file any legislation for this session. In addition, during the Governor's news briefing on Wednesday, March 25, a reporter specifically asked the Governor about business interruption insurance and if there was anything the state could do. The DECD Commissioner answered the reporter's question and stated that because of the carve out for pandemics and viruses, nothing was likely to be done at the state level to address this carve out. He did say that something may happen at the federal level similar to what happened after 9/11 when the federal government became the reinsurer for terrorism insurance. Our lobbyists are reaching out to CBIA and the SBA to gauge interest in convening a coalition to work on this issue at the state level.

### **Postponing/Suspending License Renewals**

We have received several questions from members asking if the Department of Public Health will be postponing license renewals. The Governor issued an executive order on March 27 suspending license renewals and inspections by the Department of Public Health pursuant to Connecticut General Statute 19a-131j. This statute allows for the temporary suspension of licensure upon declaration of a public health emergency. Dentists are now included in this statute (on March 30, the DPH commissioner issued an order suspending the need of ALL DPH licensees to renew their license throughout the duration of the declared COVID-19 emergency. [Click here to read the order.](#)

### **Teledentistry**

Currently, dentists are excluded from the definition of "telehealth providers" in the state's telehealth statute, and are therefore not able to practice teledentistry. We have reached out to the Department of Public Health to seek an exemption due to the current situation. It is important to note that if any executive order were to be put in place it will be time limited, and we would need to pursue teledentistry legislation in a future session to allow dentists to practice teledentistry going forward. We have also learned that the Department of Social Services is looking into teledentistry for Medicaid patients, so we are hopeful some sort of exemption or executive order will be put in place soon. We will continue to keep our members updated on this front.

## **Continuing Education**

The current CE statutes for dental hygienists limits the number of online hours they can get in a 2-year cycle to 4 hours. We have heard from members saying that their hygienists would like to use their time when the dental offices is shut down, to be able to take online CE courses, and a limit of 4 hours is too restrictive. We are working on this and will get back to you with more information.

## **Action Alerts**

Now, more than ever, it's important to stay current and engaged on legislative happenings at the state and federal levels. You can visit the [CSDA's Action Center](#) to sign up for legislative action alerts at the state level and the [ADA's Action Center](#) to stay engaged at the federal level.

## **Mental Health Resources**

As the cases of COVID-19 are increasing around the country, many people are experiencing fear, worry, and anxiety due to the uncertainty of the pandemic. It is important to take care of your emotional health and reach out to a mental health provider if you are feeling overwhelmed with sadness, fear or anxiety. We have put together a list of mental health resources to help support you during this uncertain time. [Click here where you can find the list of resources on the CSDA's website.](#)

During these uneasy and extraordinary times, everyone at the CSDA, the staff and leadership, are not silent, but are in-front of the issues daily, securing the most up-to-date and correct information, synthesizing this data and then passing it on to the membership and the government. Know that the CSDA leadership has maintained constant communication with each other and will continue to do so; the board meets weekly via conference call to remain abreast of the COVID-19 situation and its effects on the profession, especially as it relates to Connecticut dentists. We remain diligent in monitoring this fluid situation and will provide appropriate updates to keep everyone informed. Our goal is to provide you with the necessary information so that you may respond appropriately for your practice and community during this world crisis.

In the end I ask you to remain as calm, cool, collected and informed as possible. Your teams, families, and communities need you now more than ever to lead them. There is no handbook for a situation like this, and we appreciate all of your support as you are the foundation to our great organization.

Finally, I want to reiterate, please constantly check the following websites for information updates:

- [csda.com/coronavirus](https://csda.com/coronavirus)
- [ada.org/virus](https://ada.org/virus)
- [cdc.gov](https://cdc.gov)
- [portal.ct.gov/dph](https://portal.ct.gov/dph)

I hope that this message covers the concerns that many of you may have. As always, we will work on these and additional issues, and keep you updated on our progress. Feel free to contact me at [president@csda.com](mailto:president@csda.com), or any of our hard working CSDA staff members if you have any comments, questions or concerns.

Please stay safe and stay healthy.

Regards,

*Albert Natelli, DDS*

*Albert Natelli, DDS  
CSDA President*