

2021 DDS Volunteer Dentist Survey Summary

Dear Donated Dental Services Volunteer Dentists,

We wanted to share the results of our 2021 Donated Dental Services Volunteer Survey. About 40 of you responded to the survey.

Here is a glimpse of what you shared with us.

Regarding satisfaction with patients, you have overwhelmingly had positive experiences. The bulk of the responses reflect the appreciation their Donated Dental Services patients show, and many volunteers expressed the joy of helping those in need. Here are some of your comments.

- “We've always felt appreciated and had very positive interactions.”
- “I like being able to do complex cosmetic reconstructions on patients who need it.”
- “It gives lots of joy to help these individuals!”
- “They really are so grateful for the services we provide and the DDS staff are the Angels for them. They go above and beyond to find dentists and find lab specialists to provide services they need and follow up completely -- not just finding a dentist and Job done. Amazing foundation. Love it in total.”
- “It's a privilege to be able to help the less fortunate. Especially in these trying times!!”
- “We have participated with Donated Dental for years and people need help now more than ever. The patients continue to be gracious and appreciative and that is good for the staff and the docs.”
- “Well organized from the DDS group. Easy to deal with the organization. Help to connect to labs.”

Regarding satisfaction with the coordinators, the comments were positive. Here are representative responses.

- “She is very responsive and wants to make treatment of the DDS patients as streamlined as possible. One example of this is with connecting dentists and dental labs to provide needed prosthetic care of the DDS patients.”
- “Very easy to work with, very accommodating, seem genuinely interested in helping their clients.”
- “They are great. I know they will be there for me if I have a question, problem, etc., and they are always professional and charming. I enjoy the contacts I have with all, unfortunately, my staff mostly deals with them. I have even had a few patients I have referred to DDS, and then had them in my office. I have always found the coordinators excellent.”
- “Friendly, efficient, good follow up.”

Here is some feedback you offered for improving our program, as well as what you enjoy most.

We have provided responses below each suggestion (in italics) so you can get a better sense for how we manage our program.

- One dentist was sad that we had not reached out in a long time.

This sometimes happens because at this moment, there are only two coordinators managing the state of Virginia and we have over 450 general dentists.

- In trying to help those less fortunate in need of dental care, it is challenging to identify and find patients who meet these criteria. DDS provides a dentist with a program that identifies and locates these patients. DDS also takes care of the necessary non dental related paperwork allowing the dentist to focus on the patient's dental treatment. DDS allows dentists the opportunity to help someone who is truly in need of our help.

Indeed, we try to be exceptionally careful in our screening process to identify patients who are truly needy with supporting financial documentation. Additionally, we believe it is important to have patients who are motivated for care, since the dentists are offering a generous gift. If an applicant is able to speak for themselves, we connect directly with them, even if others are helping them. Sometimes others want the dental care more than the applicant but only the applicant can get himself or herself into the chair. A foremost goal of our program is to protect our dentists as best we can from unreliable patients.

- Sometimes patients have very unrealistic expectations which makes things difficult for the provider and for the entire office.... Such as should they expect dental care forever? If so I did not realize that is part of it- I thought it was one and done?

Yes, the program is considered a “once in a lifetime program”, with the goal “to restore the patient’s mouth to good oral health”. Some dentists choose to continue to maintain patients on an ongoing basis after the treatment plan is complete, and we do call these dentists once per year to gather values; however, this is the exception and not expected. We make our program guidelines VERY clear to our patients both in writing and verbally before we begin the process of placing the patient.

- [The program] allows me to provide the best possible care, with the best possible teammates (my staff), in the best location (my office)! And the coordination with multiple specialists is very helpful.

That’s why the DDS program is sooo special!

- Maybe more promotion at VDA and local component meetings...it's a great program! I really enjoyed the ease of providing care through DDS and, of course, the very happy patient. DDS coordinated all of the moving parts--including donated time and material of both an oral surgeon and lab of my choosing--to make the process so smooth and easy.

We are present at the VDA meeting each year in the exhibit hall and LOVE connecting with you all there and whenever we can. We generally do not go to local component meetings mostly because

we have more dentists in our volunteer database than we can place with patients at this time. With just two coordinators, we focus our energy and resources on placing patients.

- The only thing I have that is sometimes a bit awkward is follow-up care. Most DDS patients are full extractions and dentures. "slick 'em and plastic 'em" so follow up is not an issue. But I always try to save even a few lower teeth, as the long term (even short term!) prognosis is so much better. But a patient with teeth needs regular cleanings. I have been doing my DDS patients every 6 months post upper denture and lower partial. I find it hard to give DDS proper credit for this, and it would be good if there was some way to provide continuing patient care at no or a very small charge.

Providing donated follow up care is an option and if this is the desire, we do change the patient's status to "ongoing" [we need to know you are doing this] and call the dentist once per year to gather those values and remind them that we are willing to continue to support the case with labs and specialists if you desire. We want to support you in doing the donated work you want to do! Alternatively, once the Donated Dental Services treatment plan is complete you can convert the patient to a paying patient and charge them a reduced fee or a full fee, whatever you like. There is no obligation to continue providing donated care once the treatment plan is complete.

- I like working in my own office!! I also like the thank you notes. I like the fact that if I have a problem, DDS deals with it.

Yay! That's why we are here: to make this gift as easy and enjoyable as possible.

- Continue to work on communication. That is the key.

Excellent communication is our top priority and we hope the dentists will communicate openly and fully with us so we can effectively support the case.

- Additional specialists would be helpful.

We are always willing to try to recruit your favorite specialists for a case. We ask you first before going to our list of available specialists because we want you working with specialists and labs with whom you are most comfortable.

- There is no pressure from the DDS program.

So good to read this! A NO is always completely acceptable. We want to facilitate the work you WANT to do. There is NEVER an obligation to take a case.

- Having a list of patients with brief description of their situation and dental complaint (without names). You can send this list to the participating dentist and they can choose to offer free TX to the patient of their choice without knowing their real names!

When a patient is approved and comes to the top of the waiting list in their area, we attempt to place this patient. We contact them to make sure they are still alive, still qualify, and still need dental care. We verbally share our guidelines and responsibilities again, and we let them know we will now attempt to place them with a dentist. The patient is expectant and ready to go. The dentist has complete choice to take the patient or not. We also want to share the names because sometimes the dentist knows the applicant [this has happened more than once]. They may have had an experience with the patient previously and not want to provide treatment at this time.

- My previous experience with a prior patient was unpleasant with lots of missed appointments and even some rude comments to staff. Just really drill into patients that this is a gift and should be treated like one. Typically, it's a several thousand dollar gift.

There is nothing we want more than a reliable and grateful patient for a dentist to treat, and we go to great lengths to try to make this happen. There are definitely surprises. We want to hear immediately about any issues with a patient so we can contact the patient to discuss and sometimes take necessary action. We don't want you to have to do this and we don't want to find out at the end of the case. We try to find a balance between checking in with the dentist about how care is coming, and not wasting the staff time with our calls. It is frustrating to find out about problems in the final evaluation that we did not know about until then. We want to hear from you so we can support a successful process.

- I am happy to give back to our community that gives us so much. I believe your screening process is very conducive for this type of process. Both docs and patients know what to expect.

Excellent, this is so good to hear!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSES!

If you have not filled out our survey and would like to add to our results, please do so:

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/6459293/2021-Annual-Donated-Dental-Services-Volunteer-Survey>

We are grateful for YOU!!!

Julie Erickson

DDS Program Manager