

MCC dental hygiene students offer free dental screenings Sept. 9

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Mesa Community College dental hygiene students will offer complimentary oral health screenings to qualified individuals on Sept. 9, 2023 at the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health. | Mesa Community College | Submitted

Mesa Community College (MCC) dental hygiene students will offer complimentary oral health screenings to qualified individuals on Saturday, Sept. 9 at the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health (ASDOH).

Appointments are available at 9 and 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. and may be made by calling 480-248-8195. Time slots are on a first come, first serve basis. ASDOH is located at 5855 E. Still Circle in Mesa.

Qualified screening candidates are those who have not received dental health care for three years or longer or who have been diagnosed with dental health issues. Screenings are not comprehensive exams and treatment will not be provided during the event.

"If the patient qualifies for therapeutic, deeper cleanings for an advanced perio/gum disease infection treatment, treatment will include customized oral health care services," said Kimberlee Zitek, director of the MCC Dental Hygiene Program.

Patients are charged for such services, if needed. However, current MCC students (with an MCC student ID) receive services at a discount with a high-end estimate of \$360. Zitek explained that in private dental practice, this treatment could cost a minimum of \$1,000 without dental insurance.

"And sometimes with dental insurance it's still out-of-pocket about \$600-\$800," added Zitek.

Screening participants must agree to have a full set of X-rays taken. If patients request a copy of their X-rays, the fee is \$20. X-rays can be picked up during business hours at the ASDOH Dental Clinic.

"This event provides access to low-cost dental hygiene services to community members in need. The complementary screening includes a thorough health history exam, including blood pressure and glucose screenings, along with head/neck and oral soft/hard tissue evaluations," Zitek continued. "Many underlying health concerns have been identified by our students during this process like high blood pressure or high glucose reading concerns in addition to suspicious lesions warranting referrals to physicians and oral surgeons."

Although the event does not provide restorative dental treatment, "as dental hygienists, we do provide patients with referrals to seek out dental treatment with our dental school partnership or preferred dental home," she explained.

The event also benefits second-year dental hygiene students in many ways.

“For our students to develop advanced instrumentation skill sets and matriculate successfully throughout our program's curriculum, they need exposure to treating patients with more complex periodontal disease,” said Zitek.

Students must pass a state licensure clinical exam that requires the advanced instrumentation skills developed during their last two semesters while treating more complex periodontally involved patients.

“Moreover, it enables our students to build rapport with community members, strengthen interpersonal communication skills and exercise compassion for others as our program places a sharp focus on providing our patients with holistic oral health care,” said Zitek.

Some participants will be invited to participate as patients in the MCC Dental Hygiene program receiving personalized fee-for-service care provided by MCC Dental Hygiene students. Students provide quality care using the latest technology in comfortable surroundings at fees less than most private dental practices. All patient care is provided under the supervision of licensed dental hygienists and supervising dentists.

The Mesa Community College Dental Hygiene Clinic provides a full range of dental hygiene services offered during convenient evening hours at the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health Clinic. To schedule an appointment outside of this screening event, contact the clinic at 480-248-8195.

Additional information about the MCC Dental Hygiene Program and the dental clinic is available online at mesacc.edu/dental.

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