



# Manual for Mentees and Mentors

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## **Introduction**

For approval by AVDC, an application for registration of a proposed alternate pathway training program must identify a Mentor who is willing to supervise the training program. The Mentor co-signs the program registration form. Thus the first concrete step for a potential alternate pathway applicant is to line up a Mentor.

To familiarize yourself with the Mentee and Mentor system, and to ensure that you know the details required for successful completion of a training program, read through this document and the full set of training program documents on the AVDC web site (available by links from the *Information for Veterinarians* link from the home page at [www.AVDC.org](http://www.AVDC.org)).

## **Information For a Potential Trainee**

### **Alternate Pathway and Residency Programs**

This document provides information for trainees and diplomates who agree to participate as Mentee and Mentor in an alternate pathway training program. Unlike a residency program (which is full-time and conducted under the direct supervision of a diplomate who has obtained pre-approval of the diplomate's facility as a residency program site), an alternate pathway program is tailored to the needs and resources of a specific trainee and Mentor. It is important to ensure that there is a good match of personalities and clarity of expectations between Mentee and Mentor.

### **Commitment to the Program**

Undertaking a veterinary dental training program requires a great deal of commitment, time and money on the Mentee's part. The Mentee must be familiar with and agree to all the program and credentials requirements. The Mentee also must be aware of other time and financial commitments, which will include:

1. Preparation of the registration application materials and payment of the AVDC fee for commencing the training program
2. Commitment of professional time away from the Mentee's practice for visitations and other training requirements over a period of several years.
3. The need to increase the Mentee's advanced dental caseload.
4. The ability and willingness to keep detailed records and logs and devote time to the other associated training program documentation.
5. Expenditures for required dental equipment and materials.
6. Travel and other costs associated with visitation to the Mentor's or other diplomate's practices to meet the AVDC visitation requirements.
7. Travel and related costs for completion of the anesthesia, radiology and surgery specialist training requirements.
8. Payment of the annual AVDC training program fee.
9. Time for and cost of additional dental continuing education at seminars, conferences, wet labs, etc.
10. Preparation of credentials application materials and the fee for credentials review and examination processes.

11. Willingness and ability to take time off to study and practice for the certifying examination when the time comes.

### **Finding a Mentor**

Before approaching a potential Mentor, read through the rest of this document so that you have a good idea what a successful Mentee-Mentor relationship looks like.

Because the Mentor-Mentee professional relationship depends on the two individuals being comfortable interacting with each other over a period of several years, a cold phone call and a direct question "*Would you be my Mentor?*" may not produce the desired result. If you do not already know any diplomates personally, use the AVDC voluntary 'listing service'. The information you choose to provide is posted on the Diplomate-only web page. Diplomates are informed when there is a new entry on this area of the web site. Click the Listing Service link ([www.avdc.org/Potential\\_mentee\\_form.doc](http://www.avdc.org/Potential_mentee_form.doc)) on the Locating a Mentor web page ([http://www.avdc.org/locating\\_mentor.html](http://www.avdc.org/locating_mentor.html)) or the Alternate Pathway section of the Requirements for Entry to AVDC page ([www.avdc.org/requirements-avdc.htm](http://www.avdc.org/requirements-avdc.htm)). Alternatively, look up the AVDC Diplomate List on the AVDC web site, and then during a brief conversation at e.g. the Veterinary Dental Forum or by telephone, ask the diplomate you have identified as a possible Mentor if s/he is potentially available and whether s/he would be willing to have you visit her/his facility sometime soon. This initial no-commitment visit will likely establish whether there is a good Mentee-Mentor fit between you and the diplomate.

AVDC limits the number of Mentees or Residents that a Mentor or Residency Supervisor may supervise at any one time to a total of three, so some diplomates are not available because their Mentor 'dance-card' is full. A diplomate also may not be willing to be a Mentor for a variety of professional or personal reasons. Don't take this personally; the bottom line is that someone who reluctantly agrees to be a Mentor only because of your persistence is not likely to end up being a helpful and reliable Mentor.

### **Location of the Mentor and Mentee**

Ideally, the Mentor would be readily accessible for formal visitation times or brief consultations. Although the AVDC is growing by about 10% per year, there are still lots of cities and even some states or provinces with no diplomate. Also, a diplomate may be reluctant to enter a Mentor-Mentee relationship if s/he is located around the corner from the Mentee because of the possibility of competition.

A long distance Mentor-Mentee relationship can work very well; the record is Colorado (Mentor) and New Zealand (Mentee) – this example was very successful because the two individuals developed an excellent rapport. Having a Mentor who is located a long distance away does result in additional time and expense for the Mentee, and this should be considered when working out the details; typically, the Mentee builds in a visitation opportunity on the way to or from e.g. the Veterinary Dental Forum to keep travel costs and disruption to a minimum.

## Information For a Diplomate

### **Should I Become a Mentor?**

The decision to become a Mentor to a colleague is an important and required step for the success of the applicant in an AVDC training program and, ultimately, in successful completion of the AVDC examination by the Mentee. Diplomates who have been Mentors often find this to be a very rewarding way of repaying their debt to those individuals who helped them when they were seeking entry to the College. An added advantage of being a Mentor is that it keeps you up-to-date on the veterinary dental literature and aware of changes in College procedures!

In Greek mythology, Mentor was the loyal friend and advisor of Odysseus and the teacher of his son, Telemachus. Webster's New World Dictionary states the definition of a mentor as:

1. *A wise and loyal adviser.*
2. *A teacher or coach.*

The Mentor's role is to guide and evaluate the mentee through her or his training program, including the submission of credentials materials and preparation for the examination.

In addition to providing your dental knowledge and expertise, Mentorship will require you to set aside time for: clinical case teaching; evaluation of MRCL cases, Annual Report and Credentials application submissions; and also possibly some didactic teaching.

Familiarity with the current AVDC training program requirements is a critical aspect of a successful Mentor-Mentee relationship. Keep in mind that the training program requirements and credentials and examination processes may have changed significantly since you completed the College entry process! AVDC training program and examination information is available on the College web site (browse to [www.AVDC.org](http://www.AVDC.org), then from the home page, click *Information for Veterinarians*, and then either *How to Become a Diplomate* or *Information for Registered Applicants*). The on-line material includes all of the AVDC forms required for a successful training program.

Sometimes a potential mentee will approach you directly. The AVDC Executive Secretary informs diplomates that a potential Mentee has an entry on the AVDC Listing Service.

**An AVDC Diplomate may supervise no more than three residents or Mentees at the same time.** The Training Support Committee may recommend and the AVDC Board may approve a temporary exception to this rule pending a Board decision on a credentials application if one Mentee has completed her/his program and submitted a credentials application.

### **Questions to Ask Yourself Before You Decide to Become an AVDC Mentor:**

1. Do I enjoy working with others and sharing my veterinary dental knowledge and skills?
2. Do I have the time to devote to Mentee visits to my practice during regular business hours over the next several years? The 'visitation' requirements are stated in the *Visitation and*

Residency Supervision Information document, available on the Information for Registered Applicants page on the web site.

3. Do I have the space and facilities in which my Mentee can practice or study during visitations?
4. Do I have time to and am I willing to evaluate the performance of a Mentee and the documentation associated with the training program? The Information for Registered Applicants page on the web site provides specific information about all of the items that each applicant is required to submit for the Annual Training Program Report and for Credentials Committee review. The Mentor (or another diplomate) is responsible for reviewing individual Minimum Required Case Log (MRCL) cases and completing the MRCL Diplomate Review Form for each MRCL case. Mentors can also provide support by reviewing the equipment list, blank dental record forms, and case reports and radiograph sets prepared by the applicant prior to submission to the Credentials Committee. Please be sure that you are familiar with the AVDC documents before you commit to taking on a potential Mentee.
5. Can I maintain a professional relationship with an individual who may already be or may become a friend? Honest evaluation and constructive criticism of performance and drafts of materials are essential components to ensure that the high standards expected of a specialist veterinary dentist are met. A Mentor must be willing to identify program or Mentee inadequacies and recommend changes, or even termination of a program if necessary.
6. Are you aware of your own strengths and weaknesses in training, experience and caseload of all major aspects of dentistry? Can your Mentorship accommodate these strengths and weaknesses? Keep in mind that a Mentor is not required to be (and indeed should not be) the only source of training and support for an applicant. Visitations with other AVDC diplomate colleagues can be incorporated in a training program as necessary.

### **Evaluating a Specific Individual as a Possible Mentee**

The requirements for an alternative pathway training program are based on a multi-year time frame (minimum four years). A long-term relationship of this sort requires planning and agreement initially, plus re-evaluation along the way.

Find out what you can about the potential Mentee, through review of the information on the AVDC Mentee Listing Service, comments or references from the Mentee's colleagues, direct observation of her/his current level of dental skill and available facilities and equipment. Discuss her or his desire for training in and commitment to advanced veterinary dentistry – is s/he aware of all the program and credentials requirements? The Mentee also must be aware of other time and financial commitments, which will include:

1. Preparation of the registration application materials and payment of the AVDC fee for commencing the training program.
2. Commitment of professional time away from the Mentee's practice for visitations and other training requirements over a period of several years.
3. The need to increase the Mentee's advanced dental caseload.

4. The ability and willingness to keep detailed records and logs and devote time to the other associated training program documentation.
5. Expenditures for required dental equipment and materials.
6. Travel and other costs associated with visitation to the Mentor's or other diplomate's practices to meet the AVDC visitation requirements.
7. Travel and related costs for completion of the anesthesia, radiology and surgery specialist training requirements.
8. Payment of the annual AVDC training program fee.
9. Time for and cost of additional dental continuing education at seminars, conferences, wet labs, etc.
10. Preparation of credentials application materials and payment of the fee for credentials review and examination processes.
11. Willingness and ability to take time off study and practice for the certifying examination when the time comes.

### **Questions to Ask Before Agreeing to Mentor a Specific Individual**

1. Do you know each other well enough to believe that you can make a success of the Mentor-Mentee relationship?
2. Are you familiar with the work of the Mentee - have you worked together at meetings or on cases before?
3. Is the Mentee aware of the extent of commitment required in starting and completing the training period, credential application process and certifying examination?
4. Does the Mentee have other competing professional or personal obligations? (Unforeseen circumstances may, of course, occur following registration of an applicant in a training program, for which AVDC has a 'leave of absence' policy.)

### **If the Initial Fit Seems Comfortable**

As part of an early discussion with the potential Mentee, prepare a plan to accomplish the Mentorship and communicate the structure of the Mentor program as you envision it to the Mentee - both the Mentor and Mentee need to agree on the planned program to avoid misunderstandings! Discussion should include when and how Mentor guidance and Mentee evaluation will be provided. The program and commitments should be reviewed periodically, and adjusted by mutual agreement.

### **Consider a "Probationary Period"**

This could include inviting the applicant to visit your practice of at least a couple of days. Both the Mentee and Mentor are 'on probation'. A probationary period of 2-3 months serves several purposes:

- It lets you know whether the relationship will work at an inter-personal level. If your personalities are not compatible, a Mentor-Mentee relationship will be heavy-lifting for both of you. Are you able to give constructive criticism? Is the Mentee able to accept constructive criticism without taking it personally?

- It allows you to recognize whether the potential Mentee is likely to meet the high standards required by the College. Informing the applicant that s/he does not have what it takes early on will save both you and her/him from lots of frustration, and may be the kindest service that you can provide. Not every veterinarian has the qualities required to succeed in becoming a diplomate, no matter how strong their desire may be. Continuing a Mentor-Mentee relationship with an applicant who is unlikely to be successful has a strong negative impact on all the people involved, particularly the Mentor, and including the AVDC Committee members who have to evaluate sub-standard materials. The Mentor is “the first line” of quality control for the College and should be vigilant about evaluation of the Mentee.
- It allows the Mentee to demonstrate whether s/he is serious. It is not sufficient to be good enough - if the Mentee does not keep detailed dental records and logs during this probationary period, keeping the Mentee’s nose to the grind-stone over the next several years will be a frustrating task. It is the Mentor’s role to support but not be responsible for this. People who are not achievers, who want it easy or look for ways of bending the rules, should not be accepted as Mentees.
- Schedule an “end-of-probation” evaluation, at which the decision on whether to continue is openly discussed by the Mentee and Mentor.

### **Assisting your Mentee with the Alternate Pathway Registration Application**

Within 30 days of the proposed program start-date, an application for registration of a training program is to be submitted to the AVDC Executive Secretary. A description of the application process and the necessary forms are available from the *How to Become a Diplomate* page on the web site. Signature of the Mentor is required.

The application is reviewed by the Training Support Committee, which forwards a recommendation to the AVDC Board.

A thorough review (by both the Mentee and the Mentor) of the information on the *How to Become a Diplomate* and the *Information for Registered Trainees* web pages and related documents is strongly recommended as part of the application preparation.

The proposed training program start date is critical, because AVDC training programs have minimum time requirements. For an alternate pathway program, the minimum time required is four years. A trainee in an alternate pathway training program commenced on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005 will be eligible to submit a credentials application July 15, 2009; however, applicant in an alternate pathway training program commenced on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 will not be eligible to submit a credentials application until July 15, 2010.

### **What to do if the Mentor-Mentee Relationship is Not Working Smoothly?**

If the relationship is not working, and in the absence of a formal written contract, you as the Mentor have the right to discontinue the relationship. Prior to taking this drastic step, discuss the problems that you have identified with the mentee.

If it is clear that the relationship cannot continue, decide whether you are willing to support transfer of the mentorship to another diplomate. AVDC facilitates transfer of the supervisor role to another diplomate, and requests confirmation that both the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ Mentor agree to the transfer – this ensures that responsibilities of the Mentor such as completion

of Annual Report Supervisor Reports and Completion of Program Supervisor Reports will be handled.

If the relationship between the Mentor and Mentee has completely broken down, contact the AVDC Executive Secretary to review options. AVDC policy is that a registered trainee can continue to participate in training program activities, including logging of cases, for up to 90 days following formal notification of the end date of a mentorship relationship.

### **The Alternate Pathway Training Program**

Mentors are guides, as well as sources of education. A trainee should obtain her/his education and experience from other sources as well as from the Mentor. Visiting other diplomates should be encouraged. Constructively critical comparison of different techniques and materials should be embedded in a training program.

### **Yearly Tasks for the Mentor**

The Mentor reviews and signs off on the Mentee's Annual Report to the Training Support Committee. The items in the Mentee's Annual Report are to be sent by the Mentee to the Mentor in sufficient time to allow the Mentor to review the documents before the July 31<sup>st</sup> deadline for receipt at the Executive Secretary's office. A Mentor should not allow a Mentee to submit a deficient or substandard Annual Report document. Incomplete or late materials submitted to AVDC will be returned to the Mentee unreviewed, and substandard submissions will not be approved; both circumstances result in a delay in the training program. Mentors should realize that the high standards required for the trainee's annual report to the Training Support Committee help assure competency for the credentials application. The Mentor should assist the Mentee in achieving these standards.

AVDC requires that Annual Report documents are submitted in electronic format. A physical signature of the Mentor on each line of the log is not required.

The Training Support Committee (TSC) review of the annual Training Program Report points out deficiencies and makes suggestions for the correction of deficiencies and improvement of the program. A copy of the review is sent to the Mentor and Mentee. Mentors should review this evaluation with their Mentees.

AVDC holds lunch-time question and answer sessions for trainees each year at the annual Dental Forum, attended by the chair or other members of the Credentials, Examination and Training Support Committees; attendance at this meeting is recommended for Mentors, particularly those new to the Mentorship role.

Trainees can get an early start on preparation and review of credentials documents through the Pre-Approval process (see *Pre-Approval Information*, available from the *Information for Registered Applicants* web page). Substandard materials can be headed off by the Mentor prior to submission.

A yearly review of the Mentor-Mentee relationship by the Mentor and Mentee is recommended, to ensure that it is working for both parties. In addition to the specific program

requirements, has the trainee been working her/his way through the AVDC Recommended Reading List and practicing unfamiliar procedures using unfamiliar materials?

**Reminder!** Mentors should not feel responsible for the success and failure of their Mentees. Pulling an unwilling or incapable Mentee through the training program and the credentialing process is a disservice to everybody, including the Mentee.

### **Preparing Your Mentee for the Credentials Application Process**

Most of the work of the Mentor should be done well before the trainee sends in her/his credentials application package.

The two most important things that a Mentor can do to help an trainee's credentials application succeed are:

1. Remind the trainee to read through the AVDC training program documents before spending any time preparing specific items.
2. Suggest that the trainee performs and documents each case, from the start of the program to the completion, as if that case would be the subject of a case report. Not only will this give the applicant a large number of cases to choose from for the four required case reports, it will also ensure that logs and dental records are well kept, and will result in rapid escalation of the standard of care patients receive. The *Case Report Requirements* document is available from the *Information for Registered Applicants* page on the web site.

Note that a **case report** is to be the work of the Mentee, not the Mentor. As a guide, the Mentor may help the Mentee by commenting on case selection and the documentation available to support the proposed report. If the case does not show specialist entry-level work, it should not be selected. The Mentor may comment on whether possible discussion points and references assembled by the trainee are relevant to the case itself.

Radiograph sets must be taken by the trainee; however, the Mentor may comment on the quality of the set prior to submission.

The thought processes involved in clinical care of good quality should not be a mystery to the Mentee when s/he starts to put together the items in a credentials application - if the Mentor has to do this work, the Mentee is not yet ready to apply!

### **When the Credentials Decision Note Arrives**

**Approval:** Time for celebration for a job well done! And it is time to review the next major section of this Manual.

**Non-Approval:** AVDC sends a copy of the decision to the trainee and to the Mentor. The non-approval notification lists the options available to the trainee.

To mitigate the trainee taking the decision personally, remind the trainee that the review process is conducted anonymously for case reports and radiograph sets. Read the reasons for non-approval and assist the trainee in determining objectively whether the reasons for non-approval are valid - there is sometimes room for disagreement on some points among well-qualified people. If the non-approval decision seems arbitrary or inappropriate, review the options available with the trainee.

### **Preparing Your Mentee for the Certifying Examination**

#### **During the Training Program:**

- Underline the importance of practicing practical examination procedures.
- Review the “Possible Practical Examination Procedure List” (the list is in the *Examination Information* document, available from the *Information for Registered Applicants* page on the web site) and discuss techniques for possible procedures.
- Critique procedures performed by the trainee on either clinical cases or specimens.
- Encourage the applicant to make notes on procedures, including equipment and materials required.
- Encourage the trainee to read the “Suggested Reading Material” (the list is in the *Examination Information* document on the web site) and discuss important information in each text and in the relevant journals.
- Encourage the trainee to save and discuss with you dental-related journal articles, covering the main points of the article, relevance to clinical veterinary dentistry, study design, etc. Some applicants find it helpful to make notes on 3x5 cards (or the electronic equivalent) to summarize the important points and as a quick reference.
- Discuss cases that use the principles conveyed in the written materials.
- Consider having your Mentees write multiple-choice questions of their own from their reading material, so that they become familiar with construction of multiple choice questions. Keep these to create a “Mock Written Exam” for other Mentees, or submit them to the College for consideration by the Review and Assessment chair or the Examination Committee.
- Periodically review the AVDC web pages on training program requirements, and in particular check the *Changes For (next cycle)* document that will be on the web site and that is sent to all trainees and diplomates around the end of the calendar year.
- Encourage your Mentee to attend the Review and Assessment program (mock written and bench examination) given each year at the Veterinary Dental Forum.

#### **After the Trainee’s Credentials Have Been Accepted**

The Mentee is now referred to by AVDC as a ‘candidate’.

#### **The “Pre-examination Period”**

- Review the *Examination Information* document on the AVDC web site closely with your Mentee to be sure s/he understands the policies, guidelines, equipment recommendations and format of the examination.

- Use the multiple choice questions written by your mentees to create a “Mock Written Examination”, with a time limit (the actual written examination consists of 150 questions, with a maximum time of 4½ hours). Discuss questions and answers with your Mentee and encourage her/him to research answers to questions answered incorrectly, plus have her/him write another multiple-choice question.
- Review radiographs of cases or in veterinary dental radiography atlases to discuss principles, as preparation for the bench examination.
- Use the *Possible Practical Examination Procedure List* (in the *Examination Information* document on the web site) to create mock practical examinations. Candidates should at this point be able to organize/pack their instruments and equipment for travel. Critique technique and set time limits on procedures to improve organization and time.
- Encourage visitation of the candidate to other Diplomates and participation in other mock examination programs.
- If available, review with the candidate the summaries of veterinary dental-related journal articles prepared by the candidate and discuss major points.
- Have your Mentee complete his or her review of the texts on the AVDC “Suggested Reading List” (available in the Examination Information document).
- Direct any questions your Mentee has to the Executive Secretary of the AVDC rather than to Examination Committee members.
- **Ensure your Mentee signs and returns the “Examination Security Form” to the Secretary of the AVDC prior to January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year s/he intends to take the examination.**

#### **Two Months Prior to the Examination:**

- Discuss organization for the examination, including confirmation of a list of what equipment and supplies to take - suggest back-ups wherever possible.
- Ensure that your Mentee has finalized travel arrangements, including transportation of equipment, and hotel reservation.
- Have your Mentee hone techniques and organization for the practical examination by frequent practice.
- Review recent journal articles.

#### **When the Examination Decision is Received**

**Pass:** Cause for congratulations for your Mentee and you! Encourage the new diplomate to consider mentoring someone in the next crop of trainees.

**Failure:** AVDC sends a copy of the decision e-mail to the candidate and to the Mentor, and a failure note will include the options available to the candidate .

To avoid the candidate taking the failure decision personally, remind the candidate that the examination decisions are based on code numbers, not names.

Review the details in the failure note with the candidate. If the failure decision seems arbitrary or inappropriate, review the appeal option with the candidate.

Help the candidate work out a plan to correct her or his weaknesses identified by the examination process, so that the next attempt will be successful.