

IMPORTANT LEGISLATIVE UPDATES!

Senator Peggy Lehner is planning on sponsoring a bill on Dental Therapy. ODHA voted during a spring board meeting to support a dental hygiene base dental therapy model. We are supporting that Ohioans do indeed deserve access to dental care. ODHA also supports that the dental hygienist should work to the top of our license to provide access to oral care. Taking a licensed dental hygienist and furthering our education makes sense, much like a nurse practitioner..

The bill has not yet been introduced, but when it is, our membership and all Ohio dental hygienists will need to contact their Senator to support this bill. Please share this vital information with hygienists that you work with and encourage coworkers, family and friends to contact their Senators.

Further encouraging news:

On Nov. 14, Health Action New Mexico (HANM), the New Mexico Dental Hygienists Association, the New Mexico Dental Association and key legislators came to an agreement for dental therapist legislation for New Mexico. This agreement reached by the dental therapy taskforce members, including HANM, is a positive step towards licensing dental therapists in NM.

Below is a summary of the agreement:

- The provider will be called a "dental therapist" and can perform the majority of procedures outlined by Commission On Dental Accreditation (CODA) and in Alaska & Minnesota
- There is no bachelor's or master's degree requirement for becoming a DT in New Mexico
 - A DT will be a licensed hygienist who meets CODA dental therapy standards is the requirement
 - Limited locations where DTs can practice – rural counties and FQHCs/Tribal/Academic settings/Nursing homes statewide
 - Utilizes oral evaluation in scope versus diagnosis, which mirrors Minnesota and is working well
 - DTs cannot extract permanent teeth
 - Cavity prep & restorations requires indirect (in-facility) dentist supervision
 - Requires outcome report in 5 years to reevaluate scope for DTs – in hopes of expanding

In terms of next steps, we are now drafting legislation with our fellow taskforce members, which should be introduced with bi-partisan support. We're hopeful that if everything goes well, we'll be able to get this bill passed by both houses and signed by governor during the upcoming 30 day session.

We got to this point because of our commitment to a strong, community focused, evidence-based advocacy campaign that was shaped by the work being done nationally, in tribal communities, in AK and MN, and by our counterparts in OH, KS, VT, and WA. Thank you all for your leadership and support." Pamela K. Blackwell, JD Project Director, Dental Health Access, Health Action New Mexico.

Each State has taken a different approach to Dental Therapy based on the State needs. Ohio may elect to follow New Mexico with a licensed dental hygiene hygienist obtaining additional

training or follow the Minnesota model where a Master's degree is required. Those are the discussions that will follow once the bill is introduced.

A point of clarification, when I talk to dentist in my area of the State, they tell me that a high school graduate can become a dental therapist. This is not true especially with the new CODA Accreditation standards. An accredited program must be 3 years in length according to the CODA standards. All of the States now seeking legislation include a Dental Hygiene track that builds on the dental hygiene education.

ODHA has posted several videos and a recording of the webinar presented by *Leon A. Assael, DMD, Dean*, University of Minnesota School of Dentistry on the country's oral health care crisis, gaps in the delivery systems and the potential of dental therapist to enhance the dental teams ability to provide access to quality cost-effective dental care. The information is posted so individuals can make informed decisions with accurate evidence based data.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me, Ann Naber, Legislative Committee Chair, or President Barbara Ranck. Government Relations and the Legislative Committee members have all agreed to provide discussion sessions to any component or study group requesting more information. Please feel free to contact us! We are all very excited for this great opportunity!

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