

ODHA Position Statement on the Proposed Model of Dental Therapist in Ohio

January 2011

The Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association (ODHA) is acutely aware that many citizens of Ohio experience barriers to accessible dental care. ODHA considers addressing this issue a top priority.

As an organization of dental hygiene professionals, we constantly strive to provide valuable preventive care and oral health literacy services to the underserved. Maximum utilization of the services of licensed dental hygienists can increase quality care and reduce the need for expensive restorative and emergency dental treatment.

As an immediate, partial solution, our Association is promoting the new Oral Health Access Supervision Program created in 2010 by House Bill 190. This program allows dental hygienists to reach underserved populations under the direction of employer dentists. This program will become operational in 2011 when the rules are finalized.

However, the Kellogg Foundation recently announced it will seek support, through Universal Health Care Action Network (UHCAN) Ohio and its program Dental Access Now, to create a new dental team position in Ohio, the dental therapist. ODHA has concern regarding the minimal educational requirements outlined in this workforce model.

Should the Ohio General Assembly determine additional manpower is needed to address the lack of accessible dental care for our citizens, it is the position of the Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association that expanding the scope of practice for licensed dental hygienists would be the most efficient, expedient and fiscally responsible action toward achieving that goal.

Part of ODHA's mission is to protect and improve the public's oral health with quality oral health care delivered by a workforce with standardized, accredited education and state licensure. The Ohio Dental Hygienists' Association is the professional organization representing licensed dental hygienists in Ohio and can be contacted at 1-800-543-3104 or at odha@bex.net.
