



DENTAL THERAPISTS INCREASE DENTAL ACCESS & CREATE JOBS

Support HB 649 by Rep. Plasencia and SB 684 by Sen. Brandes

DENTAL ACCESS IS LIMITED

In Florida, access to dental care, especially for low-income Floridians, is very limited. In 2016, total Florida hospital charges for dental conditions NOT related to an accident were more than one-half billion dollars.¹

- A total of 166,997 visits were to emergency rooms for which the total charges were over \$322 million. For almost 40% of the visits, Medicaid was the primary payer.
- A total of 4,307 people were admitted to the hospital for dental conditions not related to an accident which cost more than \$195 million.
- Medicaid was the primary payer for 23% of those admitted; 30% were paid by private insurers and Medicare was 24%.

Waiting until a dental problem warrants a trip to the emergency room is dangerous for a patient and not cost effective. Because ER physicians do not have dental training or equipment, patients are, many times, given an antibiotic and a painkiller which does not address the underlying dental problem.

PART OF THE SOLUTION - LICENSED DENTAL THERAPISTS

HB 649 and SB 686 create an educated and licensed mid-level dental professional to supplement, not replace, the work of dentists. By increasing the number of trained dental professionals in the workforce, we can expand access to care and lower ER visits for dental issues. The proposal:

- Requires graduation from a three-year program approved by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) – the only independent accrediting body for all dental professionals recognized by the U.S. Department of Education;²
- Establishes the licensure, examination, continuing education and disciplinary structure for dental therapists;
- Requires licensed dental therapists to maintain medical malpractice coverage and to take a certain amount of continuing education;
- Allows but does not mandate Florida dentists to employ or contract with these licensed professionals; however, dental therapists may only practice under a Florida licensed dentist; and

- Requires a dental therapist to enter into a collaborative management agreement with a dentist and allows the dentist to choose (1) the specific services the dental therapist may provide and (2) the level of supervision they are under.

STATUS OF DENTAL THERAPY ACROSS THE GLOBE

Licensed dental therapy is not a new concept. Sixty countries allow dentists to hire dental therapists to extend care into communities with limited access. Currently five states allow dentists to hire a dental therapist and, as a result, have experienced expanded access to dental care without a decrease in patient safety or quality of care. Further, approximately 15 states are advancing or will advance proposals for the licensure of these mid-level providers.

More than 1,000 studies and assessments regarding the care rendered by dental therapists - in the U.S. and across the world – have found that the quality of care delivered is at least equal to that of a dentist for the procedures they have in common.³

Supporters of Licensed Dental Therapists *(as of February 7, 2019)*

Alachua County Commission
 Alachua County Oral Health Coalition
 Bond Community Health Center
 Brevard Health Alliance
 Broward Community & Family Health Centers
 Catalyst Miami
 Center for Oral Health
 Central Florida Health Care
 Children's Services Council of Palm Beach
 Community Health Center of Florida
 Florida Allied Dental Educators
 Florida Association of Children's Hospitals
 Florida Association of Community Health Ctrs
 Florida Chamber of Commerce
 Florida Dental Hygienists' Association
 Florida Legal Services Inc.
 Florida Policy Institute
 Florida Public Health Association
 Florida Rural Health Association
 Florida Voices for Health
 GNV4ALL
 Greater Tampa Bay Oral Health Coalition
 Head Start State Collaboration Office

Healthcare Network of Southwest
 Health-First
 Heart of Florida
 Hillsborough County Commission
 James Madison Institute
 Keys Area Health Education Center
 League of Women Voters of Florida
 Marion County Hospital District
 Miami Dade College
 Munroe Regional Health System
 North Florida Medical Centers, Inc.
 Oral Health Florida
 Palm Beach County Commission
 Palm Beach State College
 Palms Medical Group
 Partnership for Child's Health
 Premier Community HealthCare
 Suncoast Community Health Centers
 Suwannee River Area Health Education Center
 The Children's Movement of Florida
 United Way of Florida
 United Way of North Central Florida

¹Tomar, S. Hospital Emergency Department & Hospital Inpatient Admissions in Florida for Non-Traumatic Dental Conditions, 2015 and 2016. Unpublished research.

²CODA, Accreditation Standards for Dental Therapy Educational Programs. 2015; https://www.ada.org/~media/CODA/Files/dental_therapy_standards.pdf?la=en

³David A. Nash et al., "A Review of the Global Literature on Dental Therapists in the Context of the Movement to Add Dental Therapists to the Oral Health Workforce in the United States (April, 2012). <http://www.nationaloralhealthconference.com/docs/presentations/2012/05-01/David%20Nash.pdf> Also, Wetterhall, S. et. Al, "Evaluation of the Dental Health Aide Therapist Workforce Model in Alaska: Final Report," October 2010. <https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2010/10/alaska-dental-therapist-program-rti-evaluation-report>

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Floridians for Dental Access Website: <http://floridiansfordentalaccess.com/>