

THE FACTS ON DENTAL THERAPISTS: Good for Oral Health and Good for Washington

Pass HB 1364 / SB 5224

FACT:

Dental therapists will work within a narrowly defined scope of practice to provide important and needed **routine and preventive care to Washingtonians who currently can't get it.**

EVIDENCE:

In Alaska and Minnesota, 85 percent of services provided by dental therapists are routine and preventive.

Dental therapists will provide care to rural, low-income, and Tribal communities; communities of color; and patients who are publicly insured or uninsured. Currently, these communities and patients are not being adequately served by dentists—if at all.

FACT:

Dental therapists provide **safe, quality care.**

EVIDENCE:

A review of more than 1,100 studies and reports found that dental therapists provide high-quality care.

There have been no adverse patient events from dental therapists' care in Alaska and Minnesota.

Actuaries set malpractice insurance rates for dental therapists in Minnesota at only \$93 a year—compared to \$775 a year, on average, for dentists—because their number-crunching determined that dental therapists are safe.

According to an article published in the *Journal of the American Dental Association*, "a variety of studies indicate that appropriately trained mid-level providers are capable of providing high-quality service."

FACT:

Dental therapists are **highly educated, trained, and tested dental professionals.**

EVIDENCE:

Dental therapists undergo an intensive education program that includes more than 400 hours of practice during an internship alongside a dentist in the field.

By the time they begin practicing, dental therapists have as much clinical experience in the procedures they are certified to perform as a dentistry school graduate.

The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), an independent, national organization that develops and administers standards for dental education programs, has recognized dental therapy as a profession and adopted national standards for dental therapy education programs.

CODA's decision helps create a new career pathway for dental hygienists and allows local educational institutions to prepare training programs that are ready to roll out when dental therapists are authorized.

For more info:

Litonya Lester • 206.324.0340, ext. 15 • litonya.lester@childrensalliance.org.

"I had to opt to have teeth removed for free versus a root canal or fillings because I did not have insurance or an adequate income to pay out of pocket based on a sliding scale. Now that I have several missing teeth, I cannot afford a partial. Who would hire me if I smile?"

Barbara Williams, Spokane



Washington
DENTAL ACCESS
Campaign

THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR

Review of

1,100
SCIENTIFIC
STUDIES

found dental therapists provide **high-quality care.**

85%

of the care dental therapists provide is **routine & preventive.**

ZERO

adverse patient events in **10 years in Alaska** and **4 years in Minnesota**

400
HOURS

400 hours interning with a dentist in the field before they are licensed

\$93

a year for dental therapists' malpractice insurance