

WHY DENTAL THERAPY?

A key aspect of Dental Therapy's success is establishing affordable training programs which can recruit students from underserved communities to become dental providers.

Policy Recommendation: Update requirements to align with federally recognized accreditation standards and establish a dental therapy license (dental therapy is authorized in CT, but there is no license). These changes are necessary for reciprocity with other states and allow Connecticut's academic institutions to create the most cost effective and beneficial programs for students and their future employers and patients.

THE NEED

- Nearly two-thirds of adult HUSKY members (i) and one-third of children covered by HUSKY (ii) do not see a dentist each year.
- When access to care is delayed or blocked, it drives up costs and can create new needs. An untreated cavity may cause more serious and costly health problems. (iii)
- Low-income residents rely on safety-net facilities for care. Many safety-net facilities are overburdened and would benefit from this cost-effective solution that expands the dental team.
- According to the American Dental Association, 22% of dental practices that participated in Medicaid either withdrew or considered withdrawing in 2020.
- Dental therapists are a cost-effective member of the dental team that can expand capacity to treat patients.

THE CHALLENGES

- The dual-provider requirement:
 - Under current law, a CT Dental Therapist must also maintain a license as dental hygienist, regardless of whether or not they intend to use it
 - This extra requirement: Drives up cost, Slows the growth of this workforce, makes it harder for low-income people to access this career, and makes it difficult for schools to start programs – as accreditation standards are designed for standalone dental therapy programs.
- National standards do not recommend requiring all dental therapists be dually-trained as dental hygienists, but do recommend that hygienists receive advanced standing if they wish to pursue dental therapy education. Without the dual-provider requirement, the process for becoming a dental therapist will be more streamlined for schools, dental hygienists, and others entering the field.

Dental Provider Comparison

	DENTAL HYGIENE	DENTAL THERAPY	DENTISTRY
Prerequisite	0-1 year of college classes	0-1 year of college classes	Bachelor's degree
Minimum length of education program (per the CODA accreditation standards, the US Dept of Education accepted accreditation standards)	2 academic years	3 academic years	4 academic years
Number of procedures the provider can perform	~40	~75	~500
Expertise	Focus on Gums and Preventive routine care, i.e. cleanings	Focus on Teeth and Restorative routine care, i.e. fillings	Focus on Teeth and Expansive Restorative care
Anticipated Annual Compensation, Informed by Education Costs	~\$75,000(iv)	~\$75,000; ~\$110,000+ if dual degree required	~\$160,000 (v)

iConnecticut Dental Health Partnership. Outcomes and Future State. Presentation to the Council on Medical Assistance Program Oversight on January 10, 2020. Retrieved from: https://www.cga.ct.gov/ph/med/related/20190106_Council%20Meetings%20&%20Presentations/20200110/Benecare%20Report.pdf

iiAmerican Dental Association. Oral Health Care System: Connecticut. 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/OralHealthCare-StateFacts/Connecticut-Oral-Health-Care-System.pdf>

iiiHarvard Medical School. Hidden dental dangers that may threaten your whole body. January 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/hidden-dental-dangers-that-may-threaten-your-whole-body>

ivU.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Dental Hygienists. Updated September 1, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/Healthcare/Dental-hygienists.htm#tab-1>

vU.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Dentists. Updated September 1, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/dentists.htm>

