

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO IMPROVING ORAL HEALTH

S. 142/H. 2820 - An Act Relative to Graduate Education for Certain Professionals

Bill Sponsors: Senator Michael Moore and Representative Peter Kocot

Provider

The Massachusetts Dental Society believes that a comprehensive approach is needed to address oral healthcare issues facing the Commonwealth. Our bill is focused on care for underserved populations, appropriate training and supervision of a new class of mid-level dental professionals, and reduction of socio-economic barriers to seeking dental care. It is designed specifically to bring care to where it is most needed, to connect MassHealth members and other underserved populations with a new class of mid-level professionals called Public Health Dental Practitioners (PHDP) who will be directly supervised by licensed dentists.

The MDS believes the issue of mid-level professionals is just one aspect of a broader public health question surrounding oral health care. The MDS legislation addresses broader oral healthcare issues that affect nearly every resident in Massachusetts. These include the need for increased awareness about the health benefits of fluoridated water in public drinking supplies, formal integration of dental hygiene into the state's Department of Public Health, and mandatory oral health screenings of every child prior to entering kindergarten.

Education

- 2 years post-baccalaureate education – graduate level education.
- Must be currently licensed as a dental professional, including but not limited to dental assistants and dental hygienists.

Delegable Duties

- All procedures of a registered dental hygienist.
- The minimum competencies allowed within the CODA dental therapy standards, except extractions.

Supervision

- All procedures at the registered dental hygienist level shall be at the same supervision level as the registered dental hygienist.
- All procedures above the level of the registered dental hygienist (CODA procedures) shall be performed under direct supervision.

Practice Areas

- The provider must practice in either a federally designated dental health provider shortage area or in a federally qualified health center.
- If practicing outside of a federally qualified health center, the provider must see 100% MassHealth patients.

Ratio

- To ensure proper supervision this ratio is limited to one (1) dentist supervising at most two (2) midlevel providers.

Additional Components

Community Health Workers

- As part of their educational or training requirement, mandate community health workers receive oral health training for, including but not limited to, geriatric patients and Medicaid members.

Community Water Fluoridation

- Mandate DPH to annually host 4-6 community water fluoridation education seminars with local and regional health boards.

Public Health Dental Hygienist Coordinator

- Mandate DPH to hire a public health dental hygienist coordinator.
- The coordinator would be responsible for recruiting, training, monitoring, and supporting public health dental hygienists.

Dental Screening

- Mandate all children in public schools receive a dental screening prior to entering kindergarten.
- Parents/guardians would be able to waive this requirement due to financial burden or for personal reasons.
- Schools would be required to collect certain data from parents and pass along to the Department of Public Health.

Questions can be directed to:

Advocacy@massdental.org
Massachusetts Dental Society
508.480.9797

The Massachusetts Dental Society, is the organization dedicated to improving the oral health of the public and professional development of its membership through initiatives in education, advocacy, and promotion of the highest professional standards.