



Dental Therapist-hygienists: A clear, job creation solution for New Mexico's dental crisis.



ENDORSERS:

NM State Legislative Health & Human Services Committee – Endorsed dental therapist legislation (Nov.12)

AARP New Mexico

Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board (AAIHB)

Center for Civic Policy

Concilio CDS, Inc. - Las Cruces, NM

Des Moines School Health Advisory Council

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry of New Mexico

Native American Professional Parent Resources, Inc. (NAPPR)

Native Health Initiative

Nizhoni Smiles Dental Clinic - Shiprock, NM

Northern New Mexico College – Espanola, NM

NM Alliance for Retired Persons

NM Alliance for School-Based Health Care

NM American Federation of Teachers Retirees

NM Center on Law & Poverty

NM Conference of Churches

NM Dental Hygienists' Association

NM Health Resources (NMHR)

NM League of United Latin American Citizens

NM Public Health Association (NMPHA)

NM Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

NM Telehealth Alliance

NM Voices for Children

NM Youth Development, Inc., Elev8NM

Pueblo of Kewa/Santo Domingo Health Board - want dental therapists in their community.

RESULTS - Santa Fe

Rio Arriba Community Health Council

Rio Arriba County Health & Human Services

Southwest Women's Law Center

Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute

Tierra del Sol (Las Cruces) – affordable housing organization.

Union County Health & Wellness Network want dental therapists in their community – Clayton, NM

Union County General Hospital

Women's Intercultural Center – Anthony, NM

William H. Johnson, Jr. – Fmr. NM Cabinet Secretary for Human Services Dept.

Alfredo Vigil, MD FAAP–Fmr. NM Cabinet Secretary for Health & Human Services - Taos, NM.

Ronald J. Romero, DDS – Fmr. NM Dept. of Health Dental Director, Private practice dentist – Santa Fe, NM.

Howard Rhoads, DDS: Farmington, NM

Bob Giannini, DDS – Fmr. NM Dental Board Chair

Roger Ames, DDS

Bill Niendorff, DDS

Harris Silver, MD

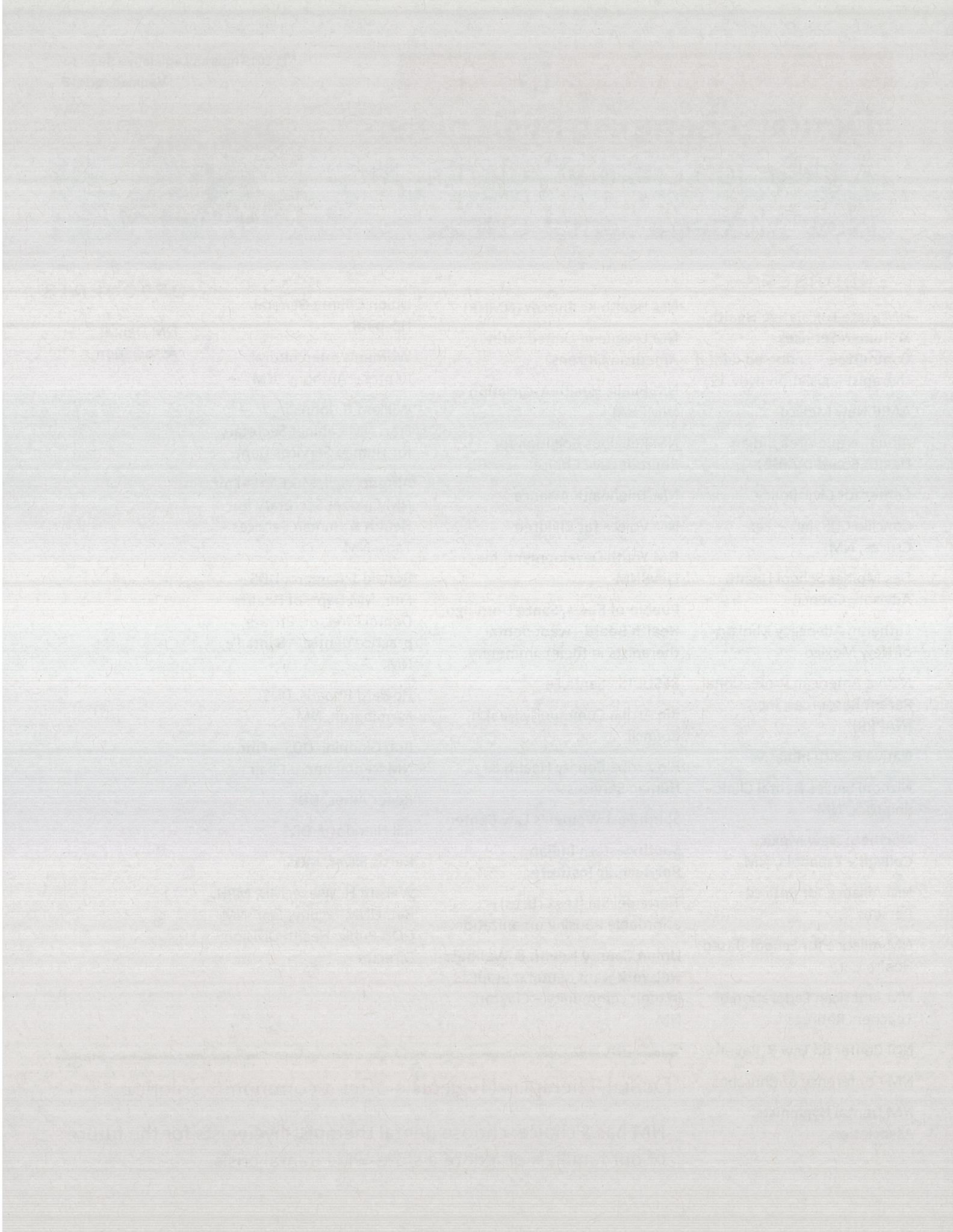
William H. Wiese, MD, MPH, Ret. UNM faculty; Fmr. NM DOH Public Health Division Director

OPPONENTS

NM Dental Association

Dental Therapist-Hygienists offer a community solution.

NM has a choice: choose dental therapist-hygienists for the future of our families, or ignore a state-wide dental crisis.



Dental Therapist-Hygienist Licensure – September 2013

Purpose of Legislation: This legislation would include dental therapist-hygienists (DTHs) as a part of New Mexico's full dental team. DTHs would improve access to high-quality, cost-effective dental services and provide economic opportunity for New Mexico's underserved, rural and tribal communities. DTHs would improve the health of New Mexico's working families, children, disabled and elders and provide a workforce solution to the urgent dental crisis in New Mexico

Defines Dental Therapist-Hygienists: A dental therapist-hygienist is an individual who –

- 1) Has graduated from a dental therapy-hygiene educational program that provides a minimum of 3 years of dental therapy and hygiene curriculum that is developed in partnership with an accredited institution of higher education;
 - a. OR, if already a licensed dental hygienist, has graduated from a dental therapy education program that provides a minimum. of 1 year of dental therapy training and education.
- 2) Is from the underserved community or similar community where he or she plans to practice (or is committed to practicing in an underserved community), receives a letter of recommendation from the supporting community as part of the application process for the DTH education program, and maintains an ongoing relationship with the sponsoring entity including one community prevention project in the supporting community during coursework;
- 3) After graduating, has completed at least 400 additional clinical hours under the indirect supervision of a dentist;
- 4) Has passed a comprehensive competency-based exam given by a nationally recognized regional testing agency if available, and if not available by an institution of higher education with a dental therapy education program, following his or her completion of a dental therapy educational program;
- 5) Has passed a written examination covering the laws and rules for practice in NM;
- 6) Holds a license to practice dental therapy in the state; and
- 7) Once licensed, can practice under the general supervision of a dentist under a written "dental therapist-hygienist management agreement."

(General supervision means the supervision of tasks or procedures by an off-site dentist at the time the tasks or procedures are being performed, pursuant to DTH management agreement, so long as those tasks and procedures are within the scope of practice for a DTH. General supervision of a DTH is achieved through daily and as needed real-time communication between the dentist and DTH using telemedicine/health information technology.)

Includes Dental Therapist-Hygienist Scope of Practice - A Cost-Effective, Financially Viable Workforce Model:

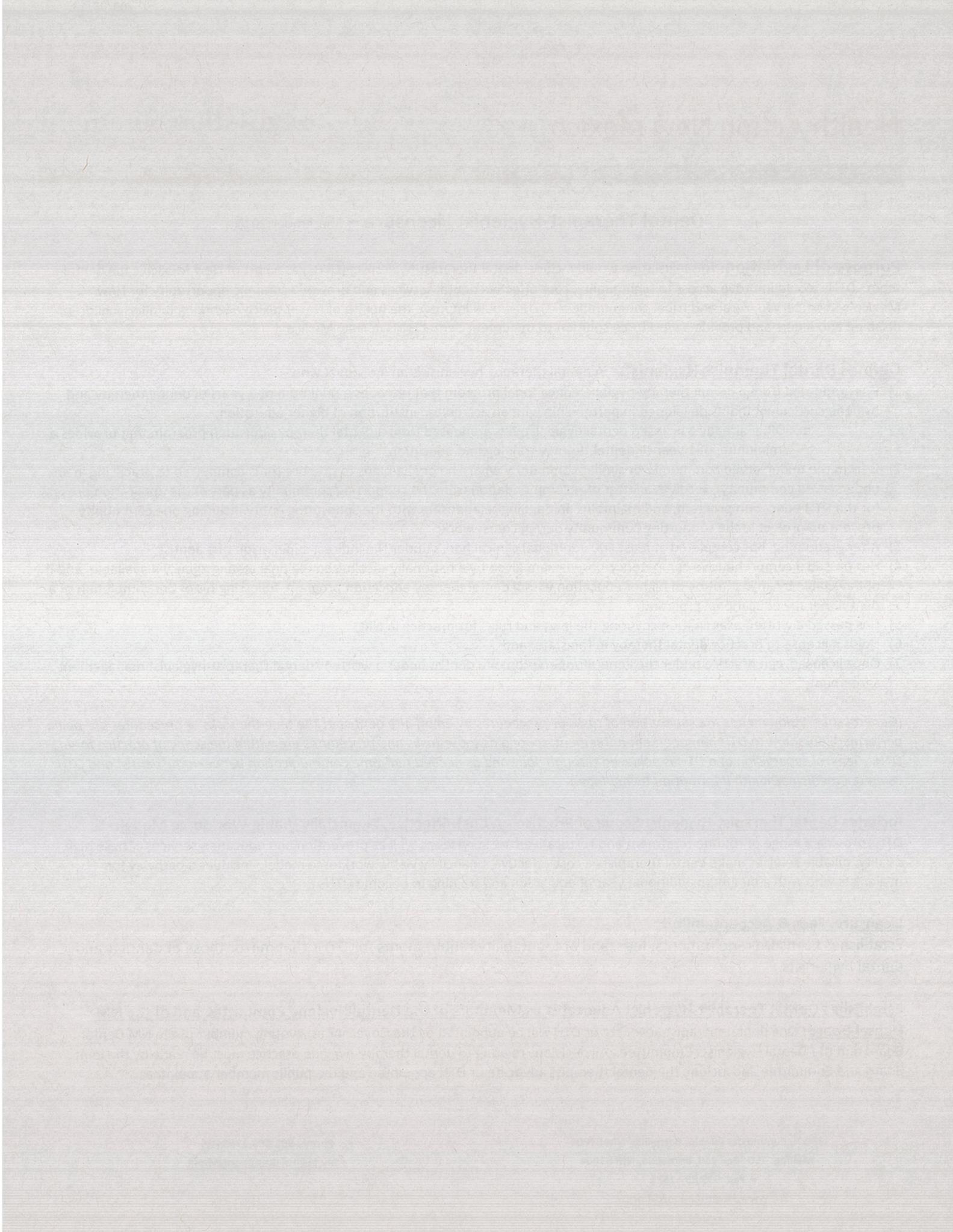
DTHs provide a range of routine treatment and restorative care services as well as prevention and education services. These high-quality, billable services make dental therapists a cost-effective, financially viable workforce model. Includes a pathway for hygienists who with a minimum additional year of education and training to become DTHs.

Licensure, Fees & Accountability:

Establishes licensure requirements, fees, and accountability requirements for DTHs that mirror those of dentists and dental hygienists.

Establishes Dental Therapist-Hygienist Advocates as Members of the Dental Hygiene Committee and of the NM

Dental Board: One dental therapist advocate or DTH will be appointed by the Governor as a voting member of the NM Dental Board and the Dental Hygienists Committee. All decisions relating to dental therapy-hygiene practice must be made by the joint Board and Committee and include the dental therapist advocate or DTH appointee and the public member appointees.



New Mexico Dental Therapist Legislative Proposal

- Speaker Bios -

Health Action New Mexico

October 10, 2013 –NM Economic & Rural Development Cmte.- Pueblo of Santa Clara/Española, NM

PAMELA K. BLACKWELL, JD

**Health Action New Mexico – Project Director, Oral Health Access
Albuquerque, NM**

Originally from New Mexico, Pamela K. Blackwell, JD is the project director for oral health access for Health Action New Mexico, a statewide healthcare consumer advocacy organization. Blackwell's family has lived in New Mexico for more than six generations and she grew up in Santa Fe and Albuquerque.

Previously, Blackwell was the Associate Director for Federal Regulatory & Payment Policy for the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) in Washington, DC. At the AANA, Blackwell was responsible for the management, strategy, policy development and implementation relating to federal regulatory and payment policy issues. Blackwell has worked directly with state and federal agencies (Medicare, FDA, DEA etc), legislators, and other organizations to develop and improve policy proposals and outcomes for her clients. Blackwell particularly enjoys educating others on the implications of federal and state policy and their very important role in influencing policy decisions.

Blackwell was a healthcare legislative assistant on Capitol Hill for Rep. Steve Schiff of New Mexico and Rep. Ralph Regula of Ohio, and served in the legal department of a major hospital system in Washington, DC. Blackwell is a board member of the New Mexico Telehealth Alliance (NMTHA) and the YMCA of Central New Mexico and has been a member of Women in Government Relations (WGR) since 2003.

Blackwell earned her BA in journalism at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO and her JD at George Mason University School of Law in Arlington, Virginia. Blackwell and her husband reside in Albuquerque with their three young children.

STEPHANIE WOODS, DHAT

Dental Therapist - Kotzebue, Alaska

Stephanie Woods is a certified Dental Health Aide Therapist (DHAT) that trained in New Zealand in 2003-2004. She has worked for the Maniilaq Association since January of 2005. After doing a six-month preceptorship in Kotzebue, Stephanie moved to the village of Shungnak, where her husband is from, and practiced dentistry in the local clinic as well as frequent travel to other villages.

In January 2009, Stephanie became the dental director for the department and moved to the region's headquarters in Kotzebue where she practiced as a DHAT part time while managing the department. One of her greatest accomplishments was sending another DHAT through school that is now practicing in one of the outlying villages and helping two more of the dental assistants get into DHAT School where they just started their second year.

In October 2012, Stephanie decided to return back to the clinic full time. She travels to the villages on week out of the month and spends the rest of her time working in Kotzebue with a strong focus on prevention. Stephanie has been a member of the Alaska Dental Academic Review Committee since 2005 and she also travels all over the country speaking about the DHAT program which she is very passionate about.

DEZBAA A. DAMON-MALLETTE, DMD

General Dentist

Member of Navajo Nation

Aztec, NM

DezBaa A. Damon-Mallette, DMD grew up in Aztec, NM and calls both Aztec and Mexican Water, AZ her home. Dr. Damon-Mallette graduated from Aztec High School and continued her education at Arizona State University, majoring in Biology and minoring in Anthropology. In 2001, she graduated from ASU with her Bachelor of Science degree and worked two years with the State Department of Education, specifically in areas of Certification and Investigation. She earned her dental degree from the Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health in 2007.

Following dental school, Damon started her career in Bethel, Alaska, which serves an area the size of the State of Oregon. It was routine to work in Bethel and fly out to remote villages to spend five to 10 days working in the field. In Bethel she also was able to work closely with six dental therapists. Just two months shy from her four-year anniversary mark in Bethel, Damon moved to Ganado, Arizona, where she was recently employed as a staff dentist with Sage Memorial Hospital.

While at Sage Memorial she also served as adjunct faculty for Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health and Lutheran Medical Center Residency Program.

MARY ALTENBERG, MS CHES

Executive Director, Community Dental Services, Inc.

Fmr. NM Health Systems Bureau Chief

Mary Altenberg, MS, CHES is the Executive Director of Community Dental Services, Inc., a non-profit dental organization providing services to vulnerable and underserved communities. Established in 1974, CDS provides comprehensive dental services to over 11,000 individuals annually. Prior to taking the position with CDS, Ms. Altenberg served as the Inter-professional Collaborative Practice Project Manager for El Pueblo Health Services, a FQHC look-alike in New Mexico. The Collaborative Practice Project is a engages primary care providers and nurse practitioners in incorporating oral health into the primary care delivery system. Through a partnership between El Pueblo, the University Of New Mexico College Of Nursing, and the Department of Dental Medicine, her role was to engage the providers of three distinct practices in expanding their knowledge and skills with the goal of providing better overall health for the patients of all three practices.

Ms. Altenberg has been active in promoting oral health in New Mexico for most of her public health career. She was the inaugural director of the Indian Health Service funded Albuquerque Area Dental Support Center, establishing and developing strategies for engaging American Indian community members in promoting oral health, as well as providing clinical and preventive resources for IHS dental programs. She then assumed the position of Health Systems Bureau Chief for the NM Department of Health, overseeing five statewide programs including the Office of Oral Health and the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health. She successfully obtained HRSA funding to establish the NM Dental Support Center, the first of its kind, modeled after the IHS Dental Support Centers. She has served two terms as chair of the NM Oral Health Advisory Council; served as the coordinator of the Governor's Council on Oral Health; coordinated the federally funded dental school feasibility study; and served as president of the NM Public Health Association. She is currently serving on the Board of Directors of the American Association of Public Health Dentistry.

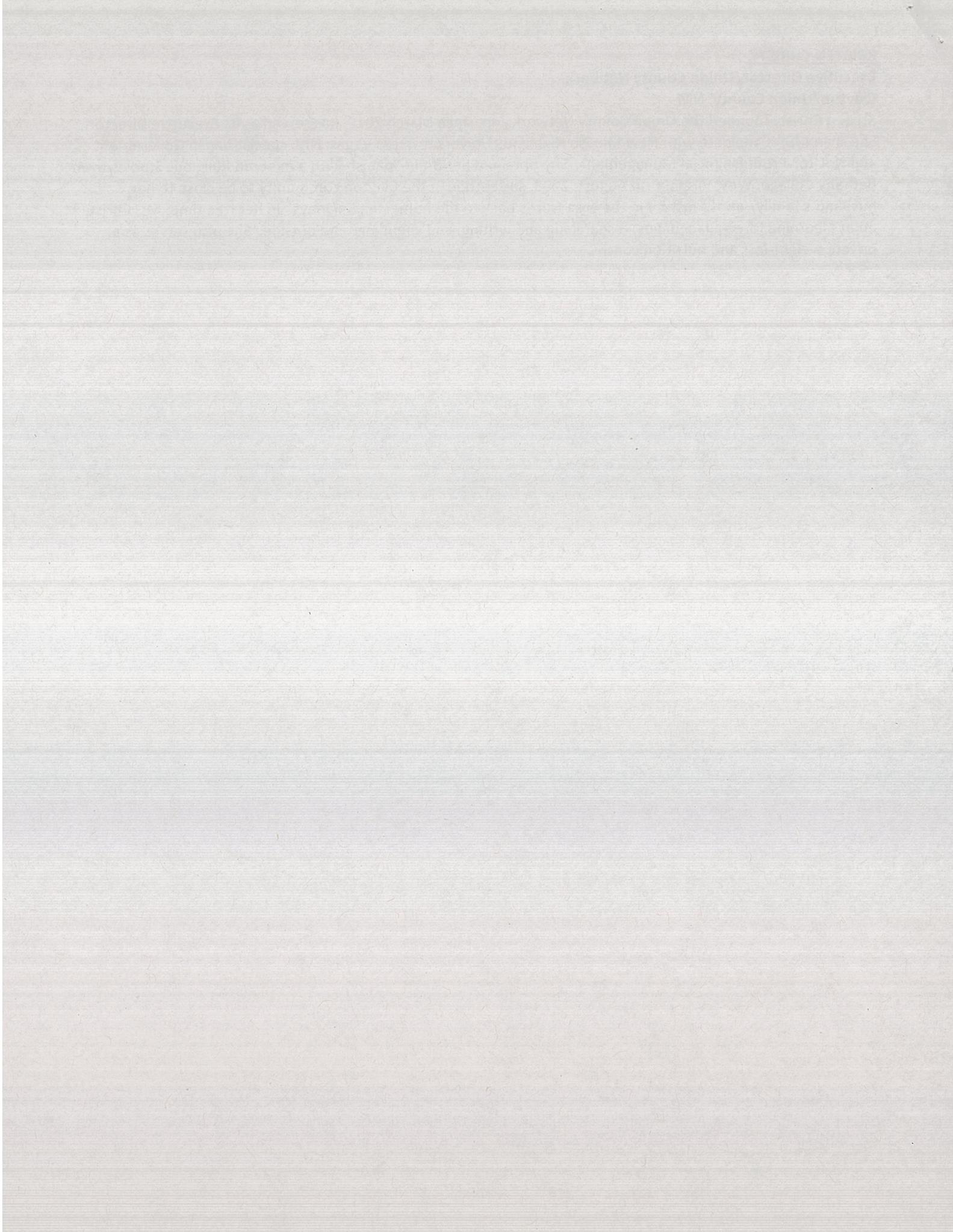
She has a Master of Science degree in Community Health Education from the University of New Mexico, is a Certified Health Education Specialist, and has completed coursework for a doctorate in Organizational Learning and Instructional Technology.

KRISTEN CHRISTY

Executive Director, Union County Network

Clayton/Union County, NM

Kristen Christy founded the Union County Network and, since March 2010, has served as its Executive Director. She is an MBA Candidate with New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, NM, specializing in Government and Not-for-Profit Financial Management. She obtained her BA in Spanish with a minor in Religious Studies from Bethany College, West Virginia. In August, 2008, she settled in the Clayton community to be close to her husband's family, whose history in the area traces back to the homesteading days. In her free time, Ms. Christy enjoys learning foreign languages, researching and writing, and spending time outside. She also serves as a private weight-loss and nutrition coach.



Dental debate

Rick Nathanson / Journal Staff Writer

Today's health care field includes all kinds of new players — physicians assistants, nurse practitioners, to name a couple. But it wasn't that way 40 years ago.

Few question the roles of nurse midwives, pharmacist clinicians or prescribing psychologists now, but when first proposed, "the people with the doctorate degrees" resisted, says Dr. Alfredo Vigil, former New Mexico Secretary of Health under Gov. Bill Richardson.

But a bill wending its way through the state Legislature aims to create a middle tier in dentistry — dental therapists with two-year degrees who would provide basic dental services such as teeth cleanings, simple extractions and fillings.

Generally, in any effort to establish a new class of medical professional, "the discussion is always about their training, safety, curriculum, oversight and how to work with the existing health care professionals. These are all bona fide and important issues," says Vigil, a family physician in Taos.

The aim of House Bill 17, the Dental Therapist Licensure Bill, is to have dental therapists practice in rural, remote and underserved populations, which could include underserved portions of larger urban areas.

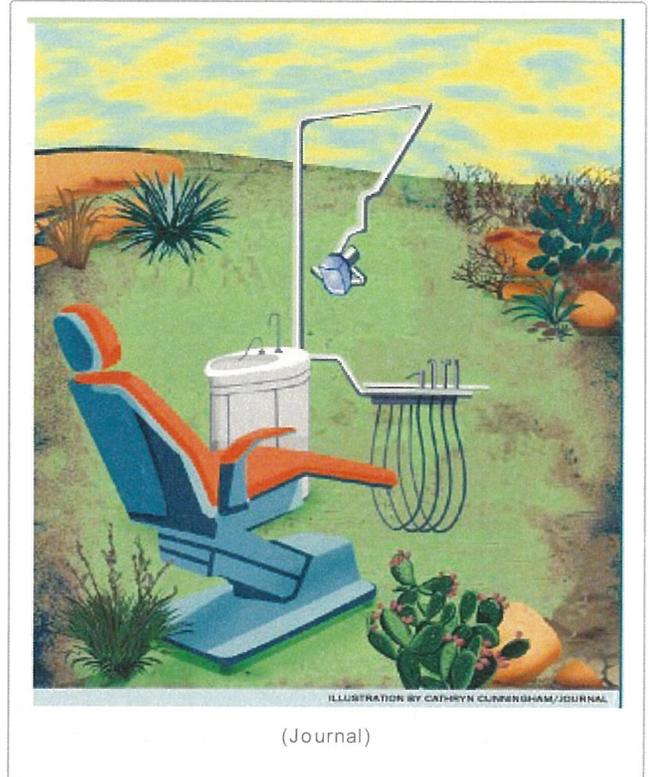
The New Mexico Dental Association, with more than 750 members, is neither embracing the concept nor enthusiastic about the proposed legislation; instead, it is backing the more recently submitted HB 367, which it helped draft, a pilot program model that allows the issue to be re-examined in 2019.

What the bill says

HB 17 was sponsored by Rep. Dennis J. Roch, R-Texico, and Sen. Carlos Sisneros, D-Questa, and was primarily drafted by Health Action New Mexico, a nonprofit consumer organization that advocates for better access to health care services.

As envisioned in HB 17, dental therapists in New Mexico would work under the supervision of a dentist, although the dentist would not have to be on site. The therapists would perform teeth cleanings, simple extractions and fillings, administer local anesthesia and refer people to dentists for more complicated conditions and dental work. They would also serve as a community resource for preventive oral health information.

A two-year program is not enough, says Michael Moxey, the New Mexico Dental Association's director of communications and advocacy. Plus, the group is concerned about the absence of a dental school to which a dental therapist degree could be tied.



However, Roch says several colleges in New Mexico have already expressed an interest in developing a dental therapist program. Students, he says, "would get two years of very specialized training in a limited skill set, so while they are doing fewer procedures, they would be doing them over and over and over, becoming experts at them."

Other models

The NMDA also questions the success of dental therapist programs in Minnesota and Alaska, the only two existing models. It is unclear, Moxey says, if either of those models would translate well for New Mexico.

Dr. Karl Self, director of the dental therapy program at the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry, says there are 16 licensed dental therapists and another nine who are "license eligible" in that state. The program is still quite new, but based on the training they receive "it is perceived as very successful," he says.

The dental therapists there are getting good training, agrees Laura Kramer, director of government affairs for the Minnesota Dental Association, but she points out that not all of them have found full-time employment, and only one of them is working in rural Minnesota. "So the greater needs of rural Minnesota are not being met," she says.

The Alaska program, taught by the University of Washington under a collaboration with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, has dental therapists working in rural Native Alaska villages under the supervision of off-site dentists.

Seeing it for himself

Fort Sumner dentist Howard Rhoads, initially opposed to the idea of dental therapists, in September traveled to Alaska at the invitation of Health Action New Mexico to observe and evaluate the model program there.

"I couldn't believe that you could take somebody and give them two years training and turn them loose to do dentistry. It didn't make any sense at all," he says.

After seeing the teaching facility in Anchorage and watching dental therapists practice in the remote area of Bethel, he changed his mind.

"They were excellent at what they were doing, absolutely textbook work regarding the procedures they trained for," he says. "They were able to go back to their villages and provide information and prevention and take care of basic dental problems."

Rhoads has come around and now thinks there is a place for dental therapists in New Mexico, although he does have one point of hesitancy. "I would not want to see dental therapists competing down the street from established dentists and dental hygienists." Rather, they should fill a niche in parts of New Mexico where people are not getting dental care and where dentists do not have practices, he says.

And that is largely the intention of HB 17, says sponsor Roch.

Rural needs

"My district includes all or parts of seven counties including Harding and Union, and those counties don't have any dentists or hygienists and as a result my constituents in those counties take time off work or school to travel" for dental care, says Roch.

Don Weidemann, hospital administrator at Union County General Hospital in Clayton, says recruiting a dentist has been unsuccessful because "we can't make the numbers work even though we bought the equipment to set up a practice."

The population is not big enough to generate enough of a patient base to keep a practice full, and dentists want assurances they can pay off their student loans as well as pay an office staff and meet other overhead expenses. "They give up a lot of income to serve in low-volume settings like Clayton."

The dental therapist model, he says, "is attractive because it could give communities like ours good basic oral health and they would not have the same investment to recover."

Then, there is the question of remuneration. Under HB 17, the limited procedures that dental therapists perform are coded and paid for at the same rate as dentists. Given that, asks Moxey, how is it any more affordable for people who are underinsured, uninsured or simply can't afford basic dental care?

Attorney Pamela Blackwell, project director for Health Action New Mexico, says the focus of the bill, regardless of how services are paid for, is to bring dental care to underserved parts of the state. "The area most underserved in New Mexico is southwestern Albuquerque," though dental therapists are clearly needed in rural, remote and tribal communities as well.

Many of these communities already have rural hospitals, clinics and federally qualified health centers with basic dental equipment that dental therapists could access, she says.

Medicaid expansion and the Affordable Care Act will bring 170,000 new patients onto the New Mexico Medicaid rolls, Blackwell notes. "Most dentists do not now take Medicaid patients nor do they have Medicaid patients as a significant portion of their patient mix," she says. "Dental therapists will allow supervising dentists to expand their reach into underserved populations, and they will now have the manpower to accept and treat Medicaid patients."

Incorporating dental therapists into a practice "is a smart business decision" because it allows supervising dentists "to see more patients and increase profits," she says, and it can ultimately lighten the work load of aging dentists and extend their years in practice.

A counter-proposal

The response to HB 17 is HB 367, introduced recently by Rep. Edward C. Sandoval, D-Albuquerque, and largely drafted by the New Mexico Dental Association, says Moxey. The new bill proposes to set up a model dental therapy project in five "dental workforce shortage" sites, to which the trainees' limited services would be confined.

To become a demonstration project site, communities would themselves have to recruit the supervising dentist as well as the therapist trainee, and provide that trainee with "adequate assistance with educational and living expenses, compensation commensurate with the dental therapist's educational level and a fully equipped dental clinical facility with staff support," according to the bill.

The model program would end June 30, 2019, and the results would be evaluated to determine if there is a future for dental therapists in New Mexico.

HB 367 offers a more "measured, scientific approach to this issue" than HB 17, which Moxey says, "wants to immediately change the Dental Practice Act to license dental therapists in New Mexico," despite the fact that there are currently "no therapists in New Mexico seeking licensure, no therapists outside New Mexico wishing to come to the state, and no New Mexican students currently enrolled in dental therapist educational programs outside the state."

Blackwell, however, says HB 367 does nothing more than attempt to "deflect" the efforts of Health Action New Mexico and its partners by establishing lengthy and impractical guidelines for dental therapists and poor and underserved communities. "We want communities to be involved, but they shouldn't have to become venture capitalists."

Suggested Reading:

- Dental Therapists Could Solve Care Issues
- Dental Therapists Not Answer to State's Problems
- Get cat dental X-rays
- Editorial: Trimming Medicaid A Lot Like Pulling Teeth
- UNM Health Sciences Center Requesting \$7.8M

Reprint story



-- Email the reporter at mthanson@abqjournal.com. Call the reporter at 505-823-3929



DENTAL THERAPIST-HYGIENIST LICENSURE BILL
A Community, Job Creation Solution for
Bringing Quality, Cost-Effective, Dental Care to
Rural, Tribal & Underserved New Mexicans

Access to Dental Services: A Health Crisis for Rural, Tribal & Underserved New Mexicans

- NM ranks 39th worst in the U.S. in the number of dentists/1,000 people. 69% of dentists are in NM metropolitan areas, and over 30% of our dentists are over age 60.
- 34% of all NM 3rd graders have untreated dental decay.
- Thousands of New Mexicans – working families, children, elders & persons with disabilities – do not have access to, or must wait many months for necessary dental care.
 - **Result:** Living in pain, miss school or work, low school performance, lost work productivity, life threatening medical emergencies, long-term serious health problems.
- Very few dentists include Medicaid patients as a significant portion of their patient mix.
- Demand will only increase: Federal law mandates dental coverage for children up to 21 yrs.

Dental Therapists: High-Quality, Local Community Providers

- Dental providers who under the off-site supervision of dentists, study after study shows provide high quality, cost-effective dental services to rural, tribal and underserved communities.
- Home-grown, culturally competent providers, selected by their communities, practice in their home or underserved community.
- Obtain rigorous, competency-based education, training and clinical experience.
- Expand dentists' reach to underserved and remote communities using telemedicine.
- Economically viable workforce model: Dental therapists provide a range of necessary and billable services from prevention education and teeth cleaning to routine extractions and restorations.
 - Cost employers less than 30 cents for every dollar they generate when serving underserved populations. (*Community Catalyst Report, May 2013*)
- Since 2005, provided care in remote Alaskan tribal villages. Over 90 years, provided care in 50 countries including industrialized countries with advanced dental systems like the U.S.
- Over 14,000 dental therapists practice worldwide.
- Approx. 20 states are looking to add dental therapists to their dental teams.

Dental Therapists: A Workforce Solution for New Mexico

- **State Law Change Needed to: Restore Rural Communities' Right to Self-Determination & Tribal Sovereignty** - For NM rural and tribal communities to have the right to train and employ a dental therapist NM state law must specifically allow dental therapists to practice in NM. Federal law took away rural and Native communities' rights to have dental therapists.
- **JOBS, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY & CAREER PATHWAYS**
 - Career opportunities for all NM communities. (NM rural and low-income communities favor mid-level oral health providers for their communities and healthcare career path opportunities for their citizens. *Con Alma Health Foundation, 2010*)
 - Provides a career pathway for NM dental hygienists to become dental therapists.

- Allows NM entities to be eligible for a **federal demonstration program grant** to train or employ dental therapists to increase access to dental services in rural and underserved communities.

Call to Action:

- **To improve all New Mexican's access to high-quality, cost-effective dental services,**
- **Provide jobs and economic opportunity for these communities, and**
- **Restore rural communities' right to self-determination and tribal sovereignty rights...**

Support the NM Dental Therapist-Hygienist Bill, that adds dental therapists to New Mexico's dental team.

***To learn more and contribute to this innovative, healthcare access solution for NM,
please contact: Health Action New Mexico***

505.867.1095

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www.HealthActionNM.org