

Daniel Kennedy, DHAT

My Journey as a Dental Therapist

Klawock, Alaska

New Mexico - October 2012

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Daniel Kennedy, DHAT

- Dental Health Aide Therapist (DHAT) in Alaska since 2009
- First U.S. trained dental therapist
- Alaska Native, Tlingit & Athabascan tribes
- Prior professional experience – Dental Assistant, AA degree in Environmental Studies
- Practice locations – rural & remote Alaska villages, health clinics, schools
- Father of two

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Becoming a DHAT: A Community-Provider Partnership, Selection Process

- Why I became a dental therapist
 - My community needed prevention education AND treatment
 - Adults and children in pain, poor health
 - No resources or consistent access to necessary dental care
- Role of community in selecting me for DHAT education program
 - Selected by local health consortium, interview
 - Had to demonstrate:
 - Desire to return to community, and signed a 4-yr contract
 - Maturity and ability to take direction

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DHAT Training & Education

- A competency-based training & education program
 - Must show you can do things well before you move on
 - Rigorous program – not all graduate
- 3000+ hours
 - Clinical and classroom training & education
 - Begin supervised training with patients in first year
- Faculty – dentists, hygienists other healthcare providers
- 1st year in Anchorage, 2nd year Bethel and smaller villages
- 400+ hour preceptorship/internship

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Treatment & Prevention

- Provide both prevention education to adults and children, and also necessary treatment services
- Travel to rural villages and provides prevention education and treatment in 3 elementary schools, 3 Head Start programs
- Educate new mom's and moms-to-be to pass good habits on to their kids
- Trained to reassure and calm agitated patients, then treat

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Dentist - Dental Therapist Supervision

- General supervision - supervised by dentist who works mostly off-site
 - If unavailable, other dentists I can contact quickly
- Communicate daily, as necessary
 - Use phone, shared computer patient records system, internet, other technology
- Know and stay within limits of my scope –
 - Refer patients to supervising dentist who need treatment beyond my scope
 - All extractions require prior approval of supervising dentist
- Supervising dentist:
 - Regularly reviews patient charts and records
 - Sees and treats patients as needed
 - Available for consultation

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Licensure & Recertification Requirements

- Competency-based exams in education program and for licensure/certification
- Rigorous recertification process every 2 years
 - Requires active participation of supervising dentist to review in-person and approve of a set number of services and treatments I provide
 - Ongoing approval process throughout the 2 years

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Dental Therapists: Community Leaders, Leading by Example

- “My community is my family.”
 - Related to most of the people in my village
 - My son’s story
- Kids run up to me when they see me in town - Give me a hug, “I’m flossing more, I’m brushing twice a day.”
- Adults approach me too to share their progress.

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Dental Therapists: Trusted Provider

- Patients keep coming back
- Parents trust me

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- Thank you -

