

Dental Therapist Legislation Summary

October 10, 2012

Legislation Title: Dental Therapists Licensure

Purpose of Legislation: This legislation would include dental therapists as a part of New Mexico's full dental team. Dental therapists would improve access to high-quality, cost-effective dental services and provide economic opportunity for New Mexico's underserved, rural and tribal communities. Dental therapists 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 Therapists: A dental therapist is an individual who –

- 1) Has graduated from a dental therapy educational program that provides a minimum of 3000 hours of dental therapy curriculum and that is at an institution of higher education;
- 2) Is from the community or similarly situated community where he or she plans to practice, has been vetted by the community as part of the application process for the dental therapy 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, practices under the general supervision of a dentist under a written "dental therapy 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 dental therapy management agreement, so long as those tasks and procedures are within the scope of practice for a dental therapist. General supervision of a dental therapist is achieved through daily and as needed real-time communication between the dentist and dental therapist using telemedicine/health information technology.)

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

Dental therapists 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.

Licensure, Fees & Accountability:

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

Establishes Dental Therapist Advocates as Members of the Dental Hygiene Committee and of the NM Dental Board:

Two dental therapist advocates will be appointed by the Governor as voting members of the NM Dental Board and the Dental Hygienists Committee. All decisions relating to dental therapy practice must be made by a joint Board and Committee and include the dental therapist advocate appointees and the public member appointees.



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Policy Proposal to Address the Dental Care Crisis in New Mexico

Virtually every family in New Mexico knows a family member or friend who has experienced serious difficulty getting needed dental care because of cost or lack of access.

- The majority of working families in New Mexico cannot afford dental care.
- Twenty-nine of our 36 counties have a documented shortage of dentists.
- Six counties do not have any practicing dentists.
- Many dentists do not serve Medicaid patients because of low reimbursement rates.
- 51% of our dentists are over the age of 55, giving us the highest percentage of aging dentists in the US.
- 36% of all New Mexico 3rd graders have untreated dental decay.
- New federal law mandates dental coverage for children up to 21 years.

The people of New Mexico deserve access to affordable, quality dental care when they need it. Continuing to wait should not be their only option or driving 3 hours, or out-of-state or out-of-country as many people do.

SOLUTION: Dental Therapists

There is a solution to this dental health crisis, one employed in over 50 countries worldwide. In the US, this solution originated in Alaska and now serves as a model for other states to refine and adapt to the needs of their respective communities. Currently, 20 states are exploring this model, which would create a new kind of mid-level dental care provider known as a Dental Therapist. These Dental Therapists would be similar to nurse practitioners in medical care, and would work as part of the dental team under the supervision of a dentist to bring high-quality, everyday dental care and critical prevention education to underserved communities. Over 14,000 dental therapists practice worldwide.

Intensive Training Program

Dental Therapists go through an intensive, competency-based training program to become proficient in the narrow scope of procedures they are licensed to perform. Many studies and evaluations of their work have consistently shown their services to be high-quality and appropriate. What results is the creation of accessible, culturally appropriate dental services to a wide range of previously underserved people in rural, urban and tribal

areas, including working families, the elderly, and the most vulnerable including children and people with disabilities.

Highlights of New Mexico's Dental Therapist Program

The Dental Therapists for New Mexico program would feature the following elements:

- Based on the best practices of the Alaska Dental Therapist program, we would develop 3,000+ hour training program offered by a joint venture of universities and community colleges strategically located to serve all sectors of the state. This would be followed by an intensive clinical internship of 400+ hours with a supervising dentist to ensure that each Dental Therapist is ready to provide high-quality care, and to establish a trusting relationship and good communication between the Dental Therapist and his or her supervising dentist.
- Local communities in rural, tribal and metropolitan areas would have an important and unique role to play in recruiting, vetting, endorsing and supporting candidates for the training program. Dental Therapists would then be able to return to the communities that endorsed and supported them.
- Dental Therapists in New Mexico would work as part of the dental care team, under the general supervision of an off-site dentist using telemedicine and other technology.
- Because the training program for Dental Therapists is less than that of a dentist, this mid-level provider would be more affordable for community clinics, school-based health clinics, and satellite practices. Further, service costs could be covered by multiple sources of reimbursement or on an ability to pay basis.
- This program would create new, livable wage jobs that are sustainable in communities throughout the state. With Dental Therapists serving in communities that previously were not served, new revenue would flow through those communities, creating a positive ripple effect in local economies.
- The entire dental services team would benefit from this new structure to meet the dental care needs of all New Mexicans. A wider market would be created for the range of dental services, making this a win-win for all dental care providers and for the families and individuals of all communities of the state.

We ask for your support and endorsement to help make this happen in New Mexico as soon as possible, drawing from the talents, the creativity, and the means that are abundantly present throughout our state. The suffering and compromised health that many children, seniors, the disabled and working families are experiencing because dental care is not accessible for them can be eliminated. **We cannot wait.** Join with us to make quality, affordable dental care a reality for our communities.

For New Mexico, a Dental Therapist program could begin almost immediately by adding this new provider under New Mexico law during the 2013 legislative session.

To support our efforts, add your group's endorsement and receive more information, contact Health Action New Mexico:

info@HealthActionNM.org

Toll free: 877 867 1095

www.HealthActionNM.org

Dental Therapists:
Improving Oral Health & Access for
Rural, Tribal & Underserved New Mexico

- Speaker Bios -
Health & Human Services Committee Hearing
October 12, 2012

PAMELA K. BLACKWELL, JD

Health Action New Mexico – Project Director, Oral Health Access

Originally from New Mexico, Pamela K. Blackwell, JD is the project director for oral health access for Health Action New Mexico, a statewide healthcare advocacy organization. Previously, Blackwell was the Associate Director for Federal Regulatory & Payment Policy for the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) in Washington, DC. 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 bachelors degree in journalism at Colorado State University and her JD at George Mason University School of Law in Arlington, Virginia.

RONALD J. ROMERO, DDS MPH

Private Practice Dentist, Former NM Dept. of Health Dental Director

Ronald J. Romero, DDS was born and raised in the Espanola Valley and is a product of the Espanola School System. He attended New Mexico Highlands University where he received a BS degree majoring in Chemistry, the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry receiving a Doctor of Dentistry degree in 1978, the University of New Mexico where he received a Master of Public Health degree, and the University of California at San Francisco where he completed a Dental Public Health Residency Post Graduate program. Dr. Romero has had an exciting dental career in dental public health. He began public service with the State of New Mexico as Chief Dental Officer for the NM Department of Corrections, a position that oversaw expansion of prison dental clinics and staff in Grants, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe in addition to assuring compliance with the dental section mandates of the Consent Decree. Dr. Romero then served as staff dentist at the Las Vegas Medical Center providing dental services for the mentally ill, adolescent and long term care patient populations. He was instrumental in assuring and maintaining compliance for accreditation with Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations. (JCAHO). From 2001 to 2005, Dr. Romero served as State Dental Director with the NM Department of Health, managing the Office of Dental Health, responsible for supervising dental sealant and prevention activities, contracts, policy development, and oral health surveillance. Under his watch, the first statewide oral health survey was conducted, assessing the oral health status of New Mexico's Children. Dr. Romero has served on many advisory committees, currently, the Early Childhood Action Network advisory committee and

the Dental State Leadership Head Start Team. He has held national leadership positions with the American Association of Dental Public Health and the American Public Health Association/Oral Health Section and a past member of the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, New Mexico Dental Association, and the American Dental Association.

TODD HARTSFIELD DDS

Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health, Advanced Education in General Dentistry Residency Program - Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry, Clinical Faculty

Dr. Hartsfield, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, graduated from Loyola Dental School in New Orleans in 1970. He served two years as a U.S. Army dentist, including a tour in South Vietnam. While in Vietnam, he started a dental training program for Buddhist monks at the Buddhist Center in Qui Nhon. Dr. Hartsfield's career has included private practice in rural Louisiana and Canada, public health dentistry and dental education. He spent 20 years in northern Canada training, supervising and working along side dental therapists in isolated northern communities. As the Dental Director for the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona for 5 years, he trained Tribal members to develop and implement oral health promotion,/disease prevention programs, such as dental sealants, fluoride varnish and xylitol gum, in addition to providing care in IHS/Tribal clinics. Dr. Hartsfield is currently an Assistant Professor of Clinical Dentistry at the Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health (ASDOH), Associate Clinical Director at Dental Care West, a private practice model clinic that is part of ASDOH, and full time faculty in the Advanced Education in General Dentistry Residency Program.

DANIEL KENNEDY, DHAT

Dental Therapist - Klawock, Alaska

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

MICHAEL E. BIRD MSW, MPH

Member of Pueblo of Kewa/Santo Domingo, Former President of the American Public Health Association (APHA)

- Thirty years of public health experience in the areas of behavioral health, substance abuse prevention, health promotion and disease prevention, HIV/AIDS prevention as well as health administration in New Mexico. He also has been involved on a number of national health disparities projects and programs working with the Centers for Disease Control, American Public Health Association, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation as well as other federal, state, tribal and not for profit organizations.
- For over twenty years, Mr. Bird was with the U.S. PHS. Indian Health Service in the Albuquerque Area serving both in the service unit and the Albuquerque Area Office.

- In 2001, Mr. Bird served as the President of the American Public Health Association. He was the first American Indian and social worker to serve in that position with association. The APHA is the oldest, largest and most diverse organization of public health workers in the world. 50,000 members.
- Mr. Bird earned his Masters of Social Work from the University of Utah and a Masters in Public Health from the University of California, Berkeley.
- In 2009 he was recognized as alumnus of the Year by U.C. Berkeley School of Public Health.
- He currently serves as Vice Chair of the Kewa Pueblo Health Board/Kewa Pueblo Health Corporation.

DONALD L. WEIDEMANN

Union County General Hospital – CEO

Don Weidemann is currently the CEO of Union County General Hospital in Clayton, NM. Under his leadership the hospital was awarded the Silver Medal for Quality/Safety from Yellowstone Insurance Exchange in 2011 and received their highest medal in July 2012, and was awarded the Business of the Year award by the Chamber of Commerce. Weidemann co-founded and was elected as the Vice-president of New Mexico Rural Hospital Network. He is president of the Clayton Rotary Club.

Weidemann has over 20 years of experience managing healthcare systems, clinics and hospitals both in the U.S. and in other countries including the following:

- President and owner of Accent Healthcare, Inc., an international consultancy firm with engagements in Guam, the Philippines and Indonesia;
- President at Adventist Health System/Asia in the Philippines where he was responsible for an eleven-hospital health system with over \$50 million in annual revenues and 1000 employees;
- Administrator of Guam SDA Clinic in Tamuning, Guam where he directed all operational, clinical and financial aspects of a large, 3-campus, multi-specialty clinic.
- Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer, Adventist Health System, Jellico Community Hospital, Jellico, TN.
- Services Director, Park Ridge Hospital, Fletcher, NC where he had direct operational management responsibility for Risk Management, Utilization Review, Infection Control, Safety, Dietary, Engineering, Biomed and Environmental Services.

Weidemann received his Master of Health Science and Public Health Finance and Administration from Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, a Master of Arts in the Teaching of Biology from Pacific Union College, Angwin, CA, and his B.S. in Biology and Physical Science from Pacific Union College, Angwin, CA. Weidemann was also a high school math, science and computer teacher.

