

Dental Therapist-Hygienist Licensure – December 2013

Purpose of Legislation: This legislation would include dental therapist-hygienists (DTHs) as a part of New Mexico's 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 one of the following education programs developed in partnership with an accredited institution of higher learning:
 - a) a dental therapy-hygiene educational program that provides a competency-based dental therapy and dental hygiene curriculum;
 - b) OR, (Accelerated Hygienist Pathway) if already a licensed dental hygienist, has graduated from a dental therapy education program that provides a competency-based dental therapy curriculum.
- 2) 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-hygiene and dental hygiene 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 as Member of the Joint Committee: One DTH or DTH advocate will be appointed by the Governor as a voting member of the Joint Committee which is comprised of all dental board and hygiene committee members, and two public members. Decisions relating to dental therapy-hygiene practice are made by the joint committee.