



Dental Therapy

Expanding access to dental care in Florida

WHAT IS DENTAL THERAPY?

Dental therapists are licensed oral health professionals who work under a dentist's supervision to provide preventive, routine, and basic restorative care such as exams and fillings to help patients stay healthy and reduce costly emergency room and urgent care visits. Educated through Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) approved programs, dental therapists must pass the same national clinical licensure exam as dentists for the similar procedures they would perform.

Allowing the licensure of dental therapists will help address Florida's provider shortage, expand access to care, and enable dentists to handle more complicated procedures. It will also create new career paths for veterans and rural residents.

HOW DENTAL THERAPY CAN STRENGTHEN FLORIDA'S DENTAL CARE SYSTEM

Bridging Oral Health Gaps

Florida ranks 50th nationally for children's dental visits, one in ten Florida adults has lost six or more teeth, and nearly one-third lack dental insurance. Further, many Florida veterans lack access to VA dental services.

Confronts a Statewide Shortage

The state needs 1,256 more dentists to meet demand, and currently, 65 of 67 counties have dental provider shortages, affecting nearly 6 million residents.

Fills Critical Workforce Gaps

Increasing skilled providers in the state will strengthen Florida's dental workforce and reach rural and low-income families.

Prevents Costly Emergencies

Emergency room visits and hospital stays for preventable dental conditions cost Florida residents, hospitals, the Medicaid Program nearly \$1 billion in 2024. Dental therapists can expand access to preventive care to alleviate these high cost visits.

Expand the Reach of Dental Practices and Health Care Clinics

Dentists can delegate routine procedures and preventive care to dental therapists, allowing them to focus on complex cases. Dental therapists can help safety-net clinics serve more patients.

HOW DENTAL THERAPY IMPROVES CARE AND INCREASES ACCESS FOR FLORIDA FAMILIES

Timely Care, Closer to Home

Dental therapists can provide preventive and routine dental services in schools, community clinics, and long-term care centers — reducing patient travel and wait times.

Better Health Outcomes

In states that authorized dental therapy, communities see better access to care, fewer emergency visits, and improved oral health outcomes.

Stronger Communities

Better oral health helps kids stay in school, adults stay in the workforce, and supports family well-being.

WHAT FLORIDA LEGISLATORS CAN DO

Legislators can support HB 363, which authorizes the licensure of dental therapists in Florida.

The bill:

- Establishes CODA-accredited education standards and scope of practice for dental therapists.
- Requires Florida licensure of dental therapists.
- Ensures Florida licensed dentists control their employed dental therapist's scope of practice.
- Requires a Department of Health progress report on implementation and patient access to dental care.

