



# What is Dental Therapy?

A Dental Therapist is a licensed health care professional that performs oral care such as routine exams, fillings, diagnoses cavities, conducts simple extractions, places silver crowns on baby teeth, performs cleanings, and educates patients about preventative measures to mitigate diseases and illnesses. They provide care for children and adults.

## Origin



Dental Therapy has existed worldwide for over 100 years! Dental Therapists increase access to quality oral health care by working in areas with dental shortages and underserved communities. By focusing on these needs, Dental Therapists make oral health care more equitable and reduce oral health disparities. The first Dental Therapy program in the United States began in Alaska. Alaska Native/American Indian leaders initiated this program to address the lack of dentists and oral health care in their communities. (W.K. Kellogg Foundation)

## Statistics



- In 2018, the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) estimated the shortage of dentists will increase to 15,600 fewer dentists than needed by 2025. (W.K. Kellogg Foundation)
- In 2018, an estimated 60 million people lived in areas that are underserved by dentists. (HRSA)
- In 2011, 80% of Americans would support allowing dental therapists to practice in their state. (W.K. Kellogg Foundation)



## Benefits

- Dental Therapy is successful in underserved parts of Alaska, Maine, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington and more than 50 countries globally.
- Dental Therapy is a community effort that contributes to more sustainable jobs and economic justice.
- Dental Therapy can address the lack of access to oral health care and the shortage of dentists.

## Occupation

- Dental Therapists are supervised by dentists.
- Dental Therapists can be integrated into an Oral Health Care Team and work closely with dentists, hygienists, dental assistants, etc.

## Dental Therapy in the U.S.

Dental Therapists are authorized to work in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Maine, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Vermont, Montana, and Washington.



## Become A Dental Therapy Champion

- Join Dental Therapy supporters by endorsing Dental Therapy at [dentaltherapy.org/endorse](http://dentaltherapy.org/endorse)
- Request a speaker from the ADTA to learn more about Dental Therapy for your local community.
- Download or view articles and research from the ADTA's website [americandentaltherapyassociation.org](http://americandentaltherapyassociation.org)

## Resources

- Expanding the Oral Health Workforce by Native Oral Health Network
- For a Want of Dentist: The Rise of the Dental Therapy Movement in Tribal Nations and the U.S. by W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Roles and Functions of the Oral Health Team by Native Oral Health Network