

# Dental Therapists Are Right for Vermont

Good for our health, good for our economy

VERMONT  
*Oral Health Care*  
*for All*  
COALITION

**? Do Vermonters have access to the dental care they need?** Not everyone. Tens of thousands of Vermonters go without dental care every year. They may live in a town without a dentist or struggle to find a dentist who will take their insurance, especially children and teens with Dr. Dynasaur, adults with Medicaid coverage, or seniors and others with lower incomes. Also, Vermonters may be unable to find dental appointments on nights and weekends so they don't have to miss work to get care.

**? What can be done to help assure all Vermonters can get dental care?** Adding a dental therapist (DT) to the dental team would help make dental care more available. DTs would expand dentists' and health clinics' ability to treat patients, especially adults with low incomes, seniors, and children and youth with Dr. Dynasaur.

**? What is a DT?** A DT is a provider who works as part of the dental team, similar to how a nurse practitioner works as part of the medical team. In Vermont, DTs would be dental hygienists with advanced training to provide preventive and routine dental care, including some restorations and simple extractions.

**? How will DTs help Vermonters get dental care?** DTs will bring dental care to communities. DTs could provide dental care in dental offices and in community settings such as schools, nursing homes, and community health centers. This means people living in places where dentists don't have offices could still get the dental care they need.

Evidence shows that DTs are an effective way to get dental care to people in rural communities, children with Medicaid, and people with lower incomes. In Alaska, DTs have expanded dental care to more than 45,000 people, mostly in rural areas. Nearly 80 percent of patients treated by DTs in Minnesota were enrolled in Medicaid.

**? Are DTs safe?** Yes. DTs have been practicing in the U.S. for more than 10 years with no adverse patient events and no reports of patient safety being compromised. In fact, a 2013 American Dental Association study recognized that, "appropriately trained midlevel providers are capable of providing high quality service," and that dental teams with providers like DTs treat tooth decay more successfully than teams without them.

**? How will DTs be trained?** Vermont DTs will be educated right here in Vermont at Vermont Technical College (VTC). VTC has more than a decade of experience providing high quality training for dental hygienists. The VTC program will meet the Commission on Dental Accreditation standards for dental therapy education programs. By the time they begin practicing, DTs will have as much clinical experience in the procedures they are certified to perform as a dental school graduate.



### ? What impact will DTs have on Vermont's economy?

DTs will create job opportunities for Vermont's dental hygienists and generate an economic impact for the state. Additionally, DTs give dentists and community health clinics the chance to expand their operations. Hiring a DT could allow a dental practice to schedule more than 1,000 additional appointments per year.

DTs will be cost-effective to employ. According to a 2013 Community Catalyst study, for every dollar a midlevel dental provider generates it costs less than 30 cents to employ them, which allows safety-net clinics and dental providers to employ DTs and offer more care to our most vulnerable community members.



Children's Dental Services, a practice in Minnesota employing DTs since 2011, reports that:

- In 2011-2012, dental therapists provided care to more than 2,000 patients, of whom 84 percent were enrolled in Medicaid, 15 percent were uninsured and one percent or less were privately insured.
- Employing dental therapists for \$45 an hour compared to dentists at \$75 an hour allowed the practice to maintain and expand services in the face of declining Medicaid reimbursement rates.
- Each dental therapist saves Children's Dental Services \$1,200 a week.
- The dental therapist model is working so well that Children's Dental Services is paying the tuition for two of its current employees to become dental therapists and offering it to a third.

## Vermont Oral Health Care for All Coalition

- American Association of Retired Persons
- American Federation of Teachers/United Professions
- Community of Vermont Elders
- Disability Rights VT
- Green Mountain Self-Advocates
- Hunger Free Vermont
- King Street Center
- Mercy Connections
- National Association of Social Workers, VT Chapter
- Planned Parenthood of Northern New England
- VT Assembly of Home Health Agencies
- VT Association of Adult Day Services
- VT Association of Area Agencies on Aging:
  - Area Agency on Aging for Northeastern Vermont
  - Champlain Valley Agency on Aging
  - Central Vermont Council on Aging
  - Council on Aging for Southeastern Vermont
  - Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging
- VT Center for Independent Living
- VT Coalition for Disability Rights
- Vermont Coalition of Clinics for the Uninsured:
  - Bennington Free Clinic
  - The Health Assistance Program at Fletcher Allen Health Care
  - Good Neighbor Health Clinic / Red Logan Dental Clinic
  - Health Connections at Gifford Medical Center
  - The Open Door Clinic
  - People's Health and Wellness Clinic
  - Putney Walk-In Clinic
- Rutland Free Clinic - Medical and Dental Clinics
- Valley Health Connections
- Windsor Community Clinic
- VT Coalition of Residential Providers
- VT Coalition of Runaway & Homeless Youth
- VT Community Action Agencies Network:
  - BROC-Community Action in Southwestern Vermont
  - Capstone Community Action
  - Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity
  - Northeast Kingdom Community Action
  - Southeastern Vermont Community Action
- VT Dental Hygienists' Association
- VT Developmental Disabilities Council
- VT Early Childhood Alliance
- VT Family Network
- VT Office of the Health Care Advocate
- VT Kin As Parents
- VT Long-Term Care Ombudsman
- VT Low Income Advocacy Council
- VT Migrant Workers Coalition
- VT National Education Association
- VT Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
- VT Nurse Practitioners Association
- VT Parent Child Center Network
- VT Public Interest Research Group
- VT State Nurses' Association
- VT Workers' Center
- Voices for Vermont's Children