
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO DENTAL ASSISTANTS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that, according to a 2016
2 report by the department of health, nearly one in four third
3 graders in Hawaii has untreated tooth decay: the highest rate
4 in the nation. More than sixty per cent of all children in
5 Hawaii lack protective dental sealants, which are a safe and
6 cost-effective intervention to prevent tooth decay in molar
7 teeth.

8 The legislature further finds that this lack of access to
9 sufficient dental care has led to devastating health outcomes
10 among children, especially those in native Hawaiian and Pacific
11 Islander communities. The high rate of tooth decay among
12 Hawaii's keiki can lead to significant pain that interferes with
13 daily activities, such as eating, learning, and socializing.
14 Untreated cavities also increase the risk of more serious
15 infection in the mouth and body.

16 The legislature further finds that the State lacks adequate
17 and accessible dental public health infrastructure, especially



1 on the neighbor islands. The 2015 Hawaii Oral Health Key
2 Findings report by the department of health suggests multiple
3 strategies to address the lack of adequate dental public health
4 infrastructure, including the development of community and
5 school-based dental disease prevention programs for all age
6 groups, continued support and expansion of affordable and
7 accessible preventive dental care services to the State's low-
8 income population, and further exploration of innovative,
9 evidence-based strategies to expand access to underserved, high-
10 risk populations.

11 The legislature further finds that dental assistants could
12 play an important role in improving access to dental health care
13 across the State. Although the Hawaii Dental Practice Act
14 allows dental hygienists to practice under the general
15 supervision of a dentist in public health settings, dental
16 assistants are prohibited from providing auxiliary support
17 except under direct supervision. This undermines the efficiency
18 of dental hygienists in public health settings and limits the
19 reach and sustainability of community dental programs.

20 The legislature further finds that, according to the Oral
21 Health Workforce Research Center, eight states, including



1 Alaska, Arizona, Maine, Maryland, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon,
2 and Wyoming, allow dental assistants to perform some tasks under
3 indirect or general supervision without licensure, registration,
4 or representation on the State Board of Dentistry. Allowing
5 dental assistants to provide limited, but essential, auxiliary
6 support under general supervision while in public health
7 settings would contribute to the development and sustainable
8 implementation of community-based dental disease prevention
9 programs. It would also expand providers' ability to offer
10 adequate and accessible oral health services to rural
11 communities and the State's most vulnerable residents.

12 The purpose of this Act is to allow dental assistants to
13 perform limited, essential duties under the general supervision
14 of a dentist in public health settings.

15 SECTION 2. Chapter 448, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
16 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
17 and to read as follows:

18 "§448- Supervision in public health settings. (a) A
19 dental assistant may operate under the supervision of any
20 licensed dentist providing support dental services in a public
21 health setting.



1 (b) General supervision shall be permitted in a public
2 health setting; provided that:

3 (1) The supervising licensed dentist is available for
4 consultation;

5 (2) The dental assistant is working directly with a
6 licensed dental hygienist; and

7 (3) The supervising licensed dental hygienist is under the
8 supervision of a licensed dentist.

9 (c) A dental assistant working under the general
10 supervision of a licensed dentist and the direct supervision of
11 a licensed dental hygienist who is under the supervision of a
12 licensed dentist may perform the following supportive dental
13 procedures:

14 (1) Taking intra-oral and extra-oral photographs, and
15 recording or charting clinical findings as directed by
16 the licensed dental hygienist;

17 (2) Exposing, processing, mounting, and labeling
18 radiographs;

19 (3) Measuring and recording vital signs;

20 (4) Assisting the licensed dental hygienist who is
21 performing a dental procedure on a patient, such as:



- 1 (A) Preparing procedural trays and armamentaria;
2 (B) Retracting a patient's oral tissues to maintain
3 the field of operation during a dental procedure;
4 (C) Removing debris, as is normally created and
5 accumulated during or after dental procedures by
6 the dental hygienist; and
7 (D) Transferring dental instruments or any other
8 concept of four-handed dentistry the dental
9 hygienist requires to perform the procedure; and
10 (5) Assisting the licensed dental hygienist in the
11 performance of the duties of the dental hygienist as
12 requested; provided that the assistance does not
13 include procedures listed in Hawaii Administrative
14 Rules, sections 16-79-69.5 and 16-79-69.10;
15 provided that the dental assistant, licensed dental hygienist,
16 and licensed dentist are employed in a public setting.
17 (d) The supervising licensed dentist shall be responsible
18 for all delegated acts performed by the dental assistant.
19 (e) As used in this section, "public health setting" has
20 the same meaning as defined in section 447-3."

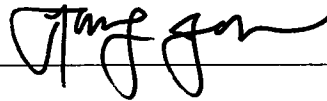
21 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.



H.B. NO. 1977

1 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

2

INTRODUCED BY: 

JAN 24 2022



H.B. NO. 1977

Report Title:

Dental Assistants; Public Health; Supervision

Description:

Allows dental assistants to perform limited duties under general supervision of a dentist in public health settings.

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