
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 in
4 the nation. More than sixty per cent of all children in Hawaii
5 lack protective dental sealants, which are a safe and cost-
6 effective intervention to prevent tooth decay in molar teeth.

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

15 The legislature also finds that the State lacks adequate
16 and accessible dental public health infrastructure, especially
17 on the neighbor islands. The 2015 Hawaii Oral Health Key
18 Findings report by the department of health suggests multiple



1 strategies to address the lack of adequate dental public health
2 infrastructure, including the development of community and
3 school-based dental disease prevention programs for all age
4 groups, continued support and expansion of affordable and
5 accessible preventive dental care services to the State's low-
6 income population, and further exploration of innovative,
7 evidence-based strategies to expand access to underserved, high-
8 risk populations.

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

19 The legislature further finds that, according to the Oral
20 Health Workforce Research Center, eight states, including
21 Alaska, Arizona, Maine, Maryland, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon,



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

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

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

17 "§448- Supervision in public health settings. (a) A
18 dental assistant may operate under the general supervision of
19 any dentist licensed under this chapter to provide auxiliary
20 support dental services in a public health setting.



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

3 (1) The supervising dentist is licensed under this chapter
4 and available for consultation;

5 (2) The dental assistant is working under the direction of
6 a dental hygienist licensed under chapter 447; and

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

9 (c) A dental assistant working under the general
10 supervision of a licensed dentist and the direction of a
11 licensed dental hygienist who is under the general supervision
12 of a licensed dentist may perform the following supportive
13 dental 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 licensed dental hygienist; and
- 7 (D) Transferring dental instruments or any other
- 8 concept of four-handed dentistry the licensed
- 9 dental hygienist requires to perform the
- 10 procedure; and
- 11 (5) Assisting the licensed dental hygienist in the
- 12 performance of the duties of the dental hygienist as
- 13 requested; provided that the assistance does not
- 14 include procedures listed in Hawaii Administrative
- 15 Rules, sections 16-79-69.5 and 16-79-69.10;
- 16 provided that the dental assistant, licensed dental hygienist,
- 17 and licensed dentist are providing dental services in a public
- 18 health setting.
- 19 (d) The supervising licensed dentist shall be responsible
- 20 for all delegated acts performed by the dental assistant.



1 (e) As used in this section, "public health setting" has
2 the same meaning as defined in section 447-3."

3 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

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



Report Title:

Dental Assistants; Public Health Settings; General Supervision

Description:

Allows dental assistants to perform limited duties under the general supervision of a dentist licensed in the State in public health settings and under the direction of a dental hygienist licensed in the State. (CD1)

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