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# 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 general supervision of  
20 any licensed dentist providing support dental services in a  
21 public 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 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 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 providing dental services in a public  
17          health setting.  
18          (d) The supervising licensed dentist shall be responsible  
19          for all delegated acts performed by the dental assistant.  
20          (e) As used in this section, "public health setting" has  
21          the same meaning as defined in section 447-3."



1 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

2 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on January 1, 2050.



**Report Title:**

Dental Assistants; Public Health; Supervision

**Description:**

Allows dental assistants to perform limited duties under the general supervision of a dentist in public health settings. Effective 1/1/2050. (SD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

