



January 18, 2018

Members of the Alaska State Legislature

The Alaska Dental Society (ADS) supports legislation to create a temporary dental license. A temporary dental license is need for two specific instances: a dental specialist who is suddenly incapacitated and a rural dentist who cannot find a replacement for an extended period of time.

Events in the past several years have exposed a critical shortage of available dental specialists in Alaska to temporarily fill in for incapacitated dental specialists. Two specialists, for different reasons, were suddenly unable to practice for several months. In both circumstances they served multiple communities and replacements with AK licenses were unable to be found. Alaskan dental specialists are in short supply and all are practicing at capacity. When a specialist is unable to practice it creates a void in the supply and given the nature of the specialty work they do it cannot be filled by a general dentist. The smaller communities typically have itinerate coverage and when that is disrupted, as was the case during the past two years, it forces patients in those communities to either go without care to have to travel to larger communities.

Dentists in rural communities struggle to find replacement dentists for absences. Most circumstances can be managed with some perseverance by the dentists' part but some of the communities have one dentist and may not be able to find a replacement for an extended period whether anticipated or not.

The ADS believes creating a temporary dental license, to be granted at the Dental Board's discretion, would solve these problems. Allowing the board to discuss and factor in the necessity of granting a temporary license would eliminate the temporary license being used as a work around to the normal licensing process as would granting the licenses for a short period of time and restricting practicing locations to the office(s) of the incapacitated dentist.

I would be happy to provide additional information or discuss the temporary license in further detail.

Sincerely,

David Logan, DDS

Executive Director, Alaska Dental Society