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House Ways and Means Committee Chair

House Labor & Commerce Committee Co-Chair

Serving House District 16: College Gate, Russian Jack, Nunaka Valley, & Reflection Lake

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

HB 111: Dental Hygienist Advanced Practice Permit

What is a dental hygienist?

A dental hygienist is a licensed oral health educator and clinical operator who uses preventive, educational, and therapeutic methods to help patients and groups attain optimum oral health. Dental hygienists work in a variety of settings--private dental offices, schools, public health clinics, hospitals, managed care organizations, correctional institutions, and nursing homes.¹

Dental hygienists typically perform oral health education and preventative care, including cleanings, (removing hard and soft deposits on the surface of the teeth), applying sealants and fluorides, and documenting patient care.¹

What is prophylaxis?

Prophylaxis is a medical term for procedures that promote oral health. This includes dental check-ups, sealants to protect teeth from cavities, flossing, fluoride treatments, etc.

What is silver diamine fluoride?

Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) is a clinically applied treatment that controls active dental caries and aids in preventing further progression of the disease. SDF has a dual mechanism of action resulting from the combination of its ingredients. The silver component acts as an anti-microbial agent killing bacteria and preventing the formation of new biofilm, while the fluoride acts to prevent further demineralization of tooth structure. Application of SDF is simple and noninvasive. Initially, the teeth are brushed without paste and rinsed. The carious teeth are isolated, kept dry, and all excess debris is removed. A microbrush is dipped in a drop of SDF and placed on the lesion(s) for two minutes. Then, excess SDF is removed and patients are instructed to not eat or drink for one hour.

¹ Anchorage, U. o. (n.d.). *Dental Hygiene*. Retrieved from School of Allied Health:
<https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/school-of-allied-health/academics/dental-hygiene/>

What is chlorhexidine?

Chlorhexidine, also known as chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG) is a disinfectant that is one of the most commonly prescribed antiseptic agents in the dental field. It has long lasting antibacterial activity, and has been shown to reduce plaque, gingival inflammation, and bleeding.

Dental Hygienist Licensing & Insurance

How do dental hygienists become licensed in the State of Alaska?

To receive a dental hygienist license in the State of Alaska, a hygienist must have graduated from an accredited dental hygiene education program, pass a national written and state clinical exam, maintain a professional license to practice dental hygiene, and hold a State of Alaska business license. The licensing process is handled by the State of Alaska Board of Dental Examiners.

How many licensed dental hygienists' practice in Alaska?

In [FY20](#) there were 659 licensed dental hygienists. 28 of those licenses were granted in 2020. In comparison there were 815 Dentists.²

What does the professional liability insurance include?

Professional liability insurance can cover malpractice legal coverage, lost wages reimbursement, HIPAA fines and penalties coverage, licensing issues reimbursement, and other benefits.

Advanced Practice Permit vs. Collaborate Agreement

What is a collaborative agreement?

In 2008, the late Senator Bettye Davis sponsored a dental hygienist bill which, when it became law, allowed for the establishment of collaborative agreements between a licensed dentist and licensed dental hygienist. Collaborative agreements allow qualified dental hygienists to provide some services without the direct supervision of a licensed dentist. For example, a dental hygienist in a collaborative agreement would be able to continue offering disease prevention education, cleanings, x-rays, and preliminary analysis in the development of a dental hygiene treatment plan without the presence of a licensed dentist and/or outside the dentist's office. Note that each licensed dentist may not maintain more than five collaborative agreements with dental hygienists at a given time.

² Alaska, S. o. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/portals/5/pub/PL_Licensing_Stats_Annual_Report.pdf

How many dentists are currently working in collaborative agreements?

This data is not currently available. The Alaska Dental Hygienists' Association estimates there are 40 ongoing collaborative agreements, out of the 659 licensed dental hygienists in Alaska.

What is the difference between a collaborative agreement and an advanced practice permit?

There are two key differences between a collaborative agreement and an advanced practice permit. First, an advanced practice permit-holder is not under the supervision of a dentist, whereas a dental hygienist in a collaborative agreement works under the general supervision of a licensed dentist. The other key difference is that advanced practice permit-holders may only serve patients who are unable to access care due to age, disability, or infirmity **and** who meet one of the seven criteria outlined in Section 2(b). Otherwise, hygienists in collaborative agreements and advanced practice permit-holders both have limitations on the services they can provide, continue to be licensed by the State of Alaska Board of Dental Examiners, and are subject to discipline if they provide services outside their limited scope of practice.

[Miscellaneous FAQ](#)

What is the objective of the anti-discrimination language in Section 5, and why is it necessary?

The anti-discrimination language in Section 5 ensures that if an insurance policy covers a service, (e.g., remove deposits from the surfaces of teeth), and if the provider is licensed to provide that service, (e.g., licensed under the advanced practice permit), then the insurer cannot discriminate against the provider based on cost or on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, etc. This ensures that insurers reimburse advanced practice permit holders consistently and fairly.

Who sits on the State of Alaska Board of Dental Examiners?

The Board of Dental Examiners consists of six dentists, two dental hygienists, and one public member. Board members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Legislature. Current board members include:

- Dentists: Chair David Nielson (Anchorage), Jesse Hronkin (Palmer), Kelly Lucas (Wasilla), Dominic Wenzell (Girdwood), Gregory Johnson (Fairbanks), and Jonathan Woller (Fairbanks)
- Hygienists: Brittany Dschaak (Dillingham), Christina Hansen (Fairbanks)
- Public: Bradley Heaston (Eagle River)