



**Oregon Health Authority
 Dental Pilot Project Program**

Dental Pilot Project: Application #300

Abstract
**Dental Therapist Pilot Project:
 Dental Therapist Project: Dental Hygiene Model**

Applicant/Sponsor:	Willamette Dental Group 6950 NE Campus Way Hillsboro, OR 97124
Project Director:	Kristen Simmons, RDH, BSDH, MHA, PhD
Training Supervisor(s):	Shannon English, DDS & Gail Aamodt, RDH, MS
Approved Project Period:	May 21, 2020 – January 2, 2025
Sponsor Type:	Dental Care Organization (DCO)

This dental workforce pilot project will be sponsored by Willamette Dental Group. Pacific University will develop and implement the dental therapy education program. In the first and second years of the dental workforce pilot project, dental hygienists from Willamette Dental Group and/or other partner organizations will be educated as dental therapists. Then Willamette Dental Group and/or other partner organizations will add these educated dental therapist trainees to their clinical practice sites and collect data to evaluate how the dental therapist trainees affect efficiency, cost, quality, patient satisfaction and patient safety. A third cohort of the dental workforce pilot project will be reserved as optional, pending funding.*

Project Objectives:

- **Improved Patient Experience**

- Goal: To expand access to consistent, safe, and high-quality oral health care.

Objectives:

1. To provide a high patient perception of customer service, safety and quality of care provided by a dental therapist.
2. To collect objective data to ensure safety and quality of treatment provided by a dental therapist.

* Excerpt from the approved application to the Dental Pilot Project Program

- **Lower Cost of Care**

- Goal: To decrease the overall cost of providing dental care by adding a dental therapist to the dental team.

Objective: Reduce the number of procedures that the dentist would have had to complete by adding a dental therapist to the dental team (thereby freeing the dentist to target more complex treatments).

- **Better Outcomes**

- Goal: To establish an efficient and effective healthcare team member that meets the needs of community members with the highest disease rates and least access to care.

Objective

Increase access to dental care by adding a Dental Therapist to the dental team.

Note: During the Utilization phase, Dental therapy procedures will be provided on >50% of individuals who experience limited access to care such as: individuals eligible for OHP coverage, adults with diabetes, older adults (65+), children with moderate to high caries risk and pregnant women with moderate to high caries risk.

- **Improved Clinician Experience**

- Goal: To successfully train dental hygienists with a restorative functions endorsement as competent dental therapists.

Objective

To prepare dental hygienists to become Dental Therapists through a unique education program that allows them to continue working as a dental hygienist while they are completing the dental therapy education program. *

Pilot Project Activities:

Dental hygienists will be trained to become dental therapists through a unique one year education program that will allow the dental hygienists to complete the dental therapy education program while they maintain their current employment as a dental hygienist. When the education phase is complete, the trainees will enter the utilization phase and practice as dental therapist trainees in their current employment setting with their supervising dentist. Patient care provided by the dental therapist trainees will be closely monitored by the supervising dentist and data will be collected to evaluate how the dental therapists affect efficiency, cost, quality, patient satisfaction and patient safety.*

Number of Trainees, Supervisors, Collaborating Dentists and Instructors

Proposed Number of Trainees:	16-24
Proposed Number of Instructors:	2-3 instructor dentists
Proposed Number of Supervisors:	8-10 faculty dentists
Number of Collaborating Dentists:	Each location will have a supervising dentist; project is approved to operate at multiple

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	employment/utilization sites and/or locations. <i>For a full list of approved sites and clinic locations please see "Approved Sites and Locations Document"</i>
Estimated Cost and Funding Source(s):	
Estimated Cost:	\$111,797.01
Funding Source(s) Committed:	PEW Charitable Trusts, Ford Family Foundation, Oregon Health Community Foundation - Oregon Health Funders Collaborative, Pacific University, Willamette Dental, Pacific University
Total Committed:	\$516,782.00

Selected Passages from the DPP #300 Application

Purpose of the Dental Pilot Project:
<p>The purpose of this project is to investigate the feasibility of adopting a dental therapist model as a new category of dental care provider for Oregon. There are multiple dental therapy models currently in use in the United States. This is proposing to evaluate the appropriateness of one such model in Oregon. This dental workforce pilot project is designed to determine if adding a dental therapist to the existing dental team is an efficient and cost-effective way to increase access to dental care, especially for patients who experience higher disease rates and barriers to care (i.e. the target population), while maintaining the quality of dental care and safety that all patients deserve. This dental workforce pilot project will also evaluate the efficacy of educating licensed dental hygienists to become dental therapists through a unique one-year dental therapy education program that will allow the dental hygienists to complete dental therapy education while they maintain their current employment as a dental hygienist.</p> <p>This dental workforce pilot project will be sponsored by Willamette Dental Group. Pacific University will oversee the development and implementation of the dental therapy education program. In the first and second years of the dental workforce pilot project, dental hygienists from Willamette Dental Group and/or from other partner organizations will be educated as dental therapists. Following the education phase, the dental therapist participants will be added as a provider to their assigned clinical practice site working under indirect and/or general supervision of their supervising dentist. Data will be collected to evaluate how the dental therapists affect efficiency, cost, quality, patient satisfaction and patient safety.</p> <p>The participants in this dental workforce pilot project will be dental hygienists who hold a current Oregon dental hygiene license in good standing with endorsements in local anesthesia and restorative functions. Participants are not required to hold an expanded practice permit or a nitrous oxide permit; however, those who hold these permits may use these skills as part of the pilot project. These dental hygienists must work in a dental practice setting that focuses on improving access to care for patients, especially those in the target population. The dental practice setting must also agree to add these educated dental therapists to their clinical practice sites and collect the data required for the evaluation plan.</p> <p>This dental workforce pilot project will be successful if the results indicate that the addition of a dental therapist to the dental team is a cost-effective way to increase access to dental care,</p>

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especially for patients with high disease risk and least access to care, while still maintaining the quality of dental care that all patients deserve. This pilot project will also assess if the work life of health care providers including clinicians and staff are improved through the addition of a dental therapist to the dental team. This dental workforce pilot project will also be successful if dental hygienists can successfully complete the one-year dental therapy education program while they continue to work in their current employment setting. *

Description of Target Population(s):

Definition/Criterion: While the goals of this pilot include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the dental therapist trainee in various care delivery models for all patient types, the utilization phase of this project will focus on populations that have been shown to have the least access to dental care and/or the highest disease rates. Because they can be identified and proactively appointed, the project will focus on serving patients who meet at least one of the following populations:

- Low-income adults as determined by patient's Medicaid eligibility (Oral Health in CCOs: A Metrics Report, Dental Crisis in America: The Need to Expand Access, Access to Affordable Dental Care: Gaps for Low-Income Adults - Kaiser Low Income Coverage and Access Survey July 2008) (<https://www.medicaidplanningassistance.org/medicaid-eligibility-oregon>)
- Children 0-18 who have moderate to high risk for caries (Oral Health in CCOs: A Metrics Report, 2012 Oregon Smile Survey)
- Adults 19-64 who have diabetes (Mealey and Rose, 2008)
- Older adults 65+ (Dental Crisis in America: The Need to Expand Access)
- Pregnant women who have moderate to high risk for caries (Access to Affordable Dental Care: Gaps for Low-Income Adults, Kaiser Low Income Coverage and Access Survey July 2008) *

Participants (Trainees)

The trainees in this dental workforce pilot project will be dental hygienists who hold a current Oregon dental hygiene license in good standing with endorsements in local anesthesia and restorative functions. These dental hygienists must also work in a dental practice setting that focuses on improving access to care, especially for patients with high disease risk and least access to care (i.e. the target population). The dental practice setting must also agree to add these dental therapist trainees to their clinical practice sites and collect the data required for the evaluation plan.

Dental hygienists are ideal candidates to train to become dental therapists because they already have extensive background knowledge and skills in dentistry. This background allows dental hygienists to be trained as dental therapists in the least amount of time allowing them to increase access to restorative dental services as soon as possible.

Dental hygienists who are licensed in Oregon can currently provide 13 of the 22 dental therapy procedures that the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) requires for dental therapy education programs. The dental treatment most often provided by a dental therapist is restoration of teeth. This procedure includes anesthetizing the tooth, preparation and removal of decay and placing the restoration. According to the Oregon Dental Practice Act, dental hygienists in Oregon can already anesthetize teeth, place restorations, and use high-speed

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handpieces, but currently they cannot prepare and remove decay. The pilot project will assess whether having existing clinical skills will expedite the education process and allow dental hygienists with a restorative functions endorsement to perform dental therapy clinical procedures sooner, as compared to a traditional dental therapy program.

Laws and Regulations Pertinent to the Proposed Project:	<p>The Dental Practice Act governs the scope of practice for both dentists and dental hygienists operating in the state of Oregon. The key provisions can be found at Oregon Revised Statutes, Chapter 680 (680.010 – 680.210 and 680.990 (Dental Hygienists)).</p> <p>818-035-0025 Prohibitions: A dental hygienist may not:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Diagnose and treatment plan other than for dental hygiene services;(2) Cut hard or soft tissue with the exception of root planing;(3) Extract any tooth;(4) Fit or adjust any correctional or prosthetic appliance except as provided by OAR 818-035-0030(1)(h);(5) Prescribe, administer or dispense any drugs except as provided by OAR 818-035-0030, OAR 818-035-0040, OAR 818-026-0060(11) and OAR 818-026-0070(11);(6) Place, condense, carve or cement permanent restorations except as provided in OAR 818-035-0072, or operatively prepare teeth;
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