



It is the Dentist's Choice to Expand Access to Dental Care

When Ohio allows mid-level dental providers, or dental therapists, to be a part of the line-up of practitioners in Ohio, it will be up to dentists to put them in the game.

Access to dental care continues to be the top unmet health need for Ohio's children and low-income adults. Ohio has 84 dental health professional shortage areas where there are not enough dentists to meet the needs of the community. Studies show that the number of dentists practicing in Ohio will decrease over the next decade.

Public health dentists across the country and the world promote an evidence-based approach to expanding access to dental providers. Team-based dental care that includes skilled mid-level practitioners can increase access to quality care in a way that is proven and cost-effective. With the number of dental health professional shortage areas in Ohio on the rise, we need to modernize our dental practice laws to expand the dental care team to include mid-level providers who can treat dental disease.

A soon-to-be-introduced bill will allow for the education and licensing of dental therapists in Ohio. But, these mid-level providers **will only** practice under the supervision of dentists.

A dentist can choose to add a dental therapist to his or her practice team.

A dentist can choose to select and hire a dental therapist.

A dentist will supervise the dental therapist in a manner he or she deems appropriate.

A dentist will choose which procedures the trained and licensed dental therapist will provide in his or her practice.

It is time to give providers—and Ohioans—**the choice** to have more quality care and care that is more affordable and accessible.

A 2012 literature review of more than 1,100 studies across multiple nations demonstrates the quality of care provided by mid-level providers like dental therapists. We have also seen it in practice here in the U.S. Minnesota is one state that has dental therapists as part of the dental team. The Minnesota Department of Health Report to the Minnesota Legislature in February 2014 shows that mid-level providers are expanding access to quality, affordable care and meeting the needs of underserved populations.

It is time to modernize Ohio's dental care line-up and improve access to care.

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