



House Bill 2528 Authorizes Dental Therapists to Practice in Oregon August 2021

In 2021 the Oregon Legislative Assembly passed House Bill 2528 that allows dental therapists to be licensed to practice in Oregon.

House Bill 2528 was supported by the Oregon Dental Access Campaign, a coalition that included a broad range of health care organizations, health care providers, educators, consumers, tribes and other advocacy groups. The Oregon Dental Hygienists' Association was a member of this coalition. After multiple amendments, the Oregon Dental Association agreed to take a neutral position on this bill. With bipartisan support, House Bill 2528 passed in the Senate 20-9 and passed in the House 45-11.

The Oregon Board of Dentistry will need to adopt rules and develop the licensing process in order to implement this law.

Key provisions of this bill include:

Education – Applicants for a dental therapy license must have completed a dental therapy education program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) or have participated in an approved dental therapy pilot project. CODA requires that a dental therapy education program include a minimum of three academic years of full-time instruction at the post-secondary level or its equivalent. Advanced standing may be awarded for dental hygienists, but they would probably still need to complete at least one academic year of full-time instruction. The only dental therapy education program in the U.S. that is currently accredited by CODA is the Lisagvik College Alaska Dental Therapy Education Program (ADTEP).

Examinations – The Oregon Board of Dentistry may require applicants to pass written, laboratory or clinical examinations to test the applicant's knowledge & skills. It is likely the Board would accept an OSCE-style clinical board examination because they are accepting this type of clinical board examination for dental & dental hygiene licensure.

Supervision & Agreement – A dental therapist may only practice under the supervision of a dentist according to a collaborative agreement.

Collaborative Agreement – The collaborative agreement must include what procedures are allowed, what level of supervision is required for each procedure, limitations on practice, guidelines for managing dental records, approved practice settings, patient age-specific & procedure-specific practice protocols, guidelines for handling medical emergencies, a quality assurance plan, protocols for dispensing & administering drugs, and referral protocols.

Patients – Dental therapists must dedicate at least 51% of their practice to patients who represent underserved populations as defined by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) by rule, or patients located in dental care health professional shortage areas as determined by OHA.

Scope of Practice – The following procedures are included in the dental therapist scope of practice. The supervising dentist may prohibit the dental therapist from performing any of these procedures and/or may require a higher level of supervision for any procedures as outlined in their collaborative agreement.

A dental therapist may perform the following procedures under the **general supervision** of a dentist:

- Identification of conditions requiring evaluation, diagnosis or treatment by a dentist, a physician, a nurse practitioner or other licensed health care provider
- Comprehensive charting of the oral cavity
- Oral health instruction and disease prevention education
- Exposing and evaluation of radiographic images
- Dental prophylaxis, including subgingival scaling and polishing procedures
- Application of topical preventive or prophylactic agents, including fluoride varnishes and pit and fissure sealants
- Administering local anesthetic
- Pulp vitality testing
- Application of desensitizing medication or resin
- Fabrication of athletic mouth guards
- Changing of periodontal dressings
- Simple extractions of erupted primary anterior teeth and coronal remnants of any primary teeth
- Emergency palliative treatment of dental pain
- Preparation and placement of direct restoration in primary and permanent teeth
- Fabrication and placement of single-tooth temporary crowns
- Preparation and placement of preformed crowns on primary teeth
- Indirect pulp capping on permanent and primary teeth
- Suture removal
- Minor adjustments and repairs of removable prosthetic devices
- Atraumatic restorative therapy and interim restorative therapy
- Oral examination, evaluation and diagnosis of conditions within the supervising dentist's authorization
- Removal of space maintainers
- The dispensation and oral or topical administration of nonnarcotic analgesics, anti-inflammatories and antibiotics
- Other services as specified by the Oregon Board of Dentistry by rule

A dental therapist may perform the following procedures under **indirect supervision** of a dentist:

- Placement of temporary restorations
- Fabrication of soft occlusal guards
- Tissue reconditioning and soft relines
- Tooth reimplantation and stabilization
- Recementing of permanent crowns
- Pulpotomies on primary teeth
- Simple extractions of: (A) erupted posterior primary teeth; and (B) permanent teeth that have horizontal movement of greater than two millimeters or vertical movement and that have at least 50 percent periodontal bone loss
- Brush biopsies
- Direct pulp capping on permanent teeth

A dental therapist may **not** perform the following procedures:

- Administration of nitrous oxide-oxygen sedation
- Placement of space maintainers
- Direct pulp capping on primary teeth

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