Alaska Dental Health Aide Therapist Educational Program
Multiple locations throughout Alaska

Program Overview
The Alaska Dental Health Aide Therapist (DHAT) Educational Program addresses the need for a culturally competent oral health workforce by educating native Alaskans to be dental providers to work in Alaska’s rural communities. Dental therapists possess language skills and cultural fluency that make them advocates of oral care in their home regions.

Program History and Development
The DHAT Educational Program was developed in 2003 when the Alaska Native Tribal Consortium (ANTHC), with financial support from the Rasmuson Foundation, sent the first cohort of Alaskan students to attend the dental therapist training program at Otago University in Dunedin, New Zealand. By 2007, ANTHC established its own DHAT Educational Program, which was the first program of its kind in the United States. As of early 2016, 32 DHATs provided oral health prevention and restorative care to nearly 40,000 Alaska Native people in more than 75 villages. Two students from two Tribes outside of Alaska were also enrolled in the program at that time.

Program Sustainability
- The Alaska DHAT Educational Program is supported by: the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Alaska Tribal Health Organizations, Indian Health Service (IHS), the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Rasmuson Foundation.
- Funding for the program is split between: Alaska Tribal Support (40%), philanthropy (30%), the Indian Health Services (25%), and DHAT patient revenue (5%). The annual budget of the program is $1.7 million.
- This program provides services to Alaska Native people living in rural Alaska who are covered by Alaska Medicaid.

Program Impact
- The Alaska DHAT Program provides dental services to about 830 individuals each year in more than 80 of Alaska’s 215 rural villages.
- According to a study by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Alaska DHAT Educational Program reduces costs by reducing the average number of trips that are made outside of the village for dental care.¹
- A report by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) demonstrated high patient satisfaction with the Alaska DHAT Educational Program. This was measured by adults reporting a positive experience with dental therapists and individuals reporting that dental therapists were easy to understand, listened carefully, and treated them with courtesy and respect. The same report demonstrated that Alaska’s DHATs are providing safe and competent care.²
- Post-implementation usage data suggests that this program has enhanced access to quality oral health services for individuals living in rural Alaska who previously had limited or no access to these services.
- The Alaska DHAT Educational Program has received the Indian Health Service (IHS) Director’s Award, the Alaska Primary Care Association’s 2010 Chinook Award, and the Barbara Berger Excellence in Public Health Award.

Program Contact Information
Program Phone Number: 907-729-5600
Program Website: http://depts.washington.edu/dentexak/

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Program Features

**Age**
- ☒ 0-17 (Children and Youth)
- ☒ 18-60 (Adult)
- ☒ 60+ (Older Adult)

**Specific Populations**
- ☐ Homeless individuals
- ☐ Individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities
- ☐ Individuals with physical disabilities
- ☐ Individuals with specific or complex medical conditions
- ☒ Individuals with low income
- ☒ Individuals with no dental insurance
- ☒ Individuals with Medicaid
- ☐ Veterans
- ☐ Refugees/immigrants

**Geography**
- ☒ Rural
- ☐ Urban

**Service Delivery Setting**
- ☐ Hospital
- ☐ Dental school
- ☒ Community/safety net clinic
- ☐ Private dental office
- ☐ Long-term care facility
- ☒ Senior center/community center
- ☐ Private residence
- ☐ Fairgrounds/stadium/parking lot
- ☐ Church
- ☐ School
- ☐ Homeless shelter
- ☐ Public housing

**Service Delivery Model**
- ☒ Dental clinic model (e.g. permanent setting)
- ☒ Mobile-portable model
- ☒ Eligibility and enrollment model (e.g. referrals, care coordination)
- ☒ Virtual model (e.g. telehealth)
- ☒ Event-based model
- ☒ Outreach and education model

**Dental and Oral Health Services**
- ☒ Emergency services
- ☒ Basic services
- ☒ Screenings
- ☒ Cleanings
- ☒ Fluoride varnish
- ☒ Sealants
- ☒ X-rays
- ☒ Comprehensive services
- ☒ Fillings
- ☒ Scaling/root planing
- ☒ Extractions
- ☐ Oral surgery
- ☒ Root canals
- ☒ Dentures, partials, relines, repairs
- ☐ Crowns
- ☐ Bridges
- ☐ Orthodontics

**Staffing**
- ☒ Dentist
- ☐ Dental hygienist
- ☒ Dental therapist
- ☐ Dental assistant
- ☐ Dental/dental hygiene students
- ☐ Nursing staff
- ☒ Community health workers
- ☐ Non-dental clinical staff
- ☐ Non-clinical staff

**Payment for Care**
- ☒ Medicaid
- ☒ No charge to client
- ☐ Sliding fee scale
- ☒ Out of pocket
- ☒ Commercial dental insurance

**Program Funding**
- ☒ Foundation/organization grant
- ☒ Public funding (e.g. local, state, federal)
- ☒ Private donations (e.g. individuals, businesses)

**Integration with Services**
- ☒ Medical services
- ☒ Behavioral health services
- ☐ Vision services
- ☐ Pharmacy services
- □ Transportation services
- ☐ Translation services
- ☒ Nutrition services

*This profile was prepared using publicly available information. Date of last update: March 2016*