



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



Photo courtesy of Alaska DHAT Educational Program.

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.

"This solution will help our people immediately address their own oral health needs in ways that have not been possible until today."

- Brian Cladoosby, Chairman of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community

Program Contact Information

Program Phone Number: 907-729-5600

Program Website: <http://depts.washington.edu/dentexak/>

¹ [1]The Pew Charitable Trusts (June 30, 2014). Expanding the Dental Team: Increasing Access to Care in Public Settings. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2014/06/30/expanding-the-dental-team>

² [1] RTI International (October 2010). Evaluation of the Dental Health Aide Therapist Workforce Model in Alaska. Retrieved from: <http://www.rti.org/pubs/alaskadhathatprogramevaluationfinal102510.pdf>



Alaska Dental Health Aide Therapist Educational Program

Multiple locations throughout Alaska

Program Features

Note: A checked box below indicates an existing program feature.

Age	Service Delivery Model	Dental and Oral Health Services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 0-17 (Children and Youth) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18-60 (Adult) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 60+ (Older Adult)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dental clinic model (e.g. permanent setting) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mobile-portable model <input type="checkbox"/> Eligibility and enrollment model (e.g. referrals, care coordination) <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual model (e.g. telehealth) <input type="checkbox"/> Event-based model <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Outreach and education model	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emergency services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Basic services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Screenings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cleanings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fluoride varnish <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sealants <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X-rays <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fillings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scaling/root planing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Extractions <input type="checkbox"/> Oral surgery <input type="checkbox"/> Root canals <input type="checkbox"/> Dentures, partials, relines, repairs <input type="checkbox"/> Crowns <input type="checkbox"/> Bridges <input type="checkbox"/> Orthodontics
Specific Populations	Staffing	Other Program Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Homeless individuals <input type="checkbox"/> Individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Individuals with physical disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Individuals with specific or complex medical conditions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Individuals with low income <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Individuals with no dental insurance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Individuals with Medicaid <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans <input type="checkbox"/> Refugees/immigrants	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dentist <input type="checkbox"/> Dental hygienist <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dental therapist <input type="checkbox"/> Dental assistant <input type="checkbox"/> Dental/dental hygiene students <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community health workers <input type="checkbox"/> Non-dental clinical staff <input type="checkbox"/> Non-clinical staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referrals to dental and oral health services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Care coordination/care management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patient education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caregiver education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provider education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocacy/coalition
Geography	Payment for Care	Integration with Services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rural <input type="checkbox"/> Urban	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medicaid <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No charge to client <input type="checkbox"/> Sliding fee scale <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Out of pocket <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial dental insurance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medical services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Behavioral health services <input type="checkbox"/> Vision services <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation services <input type="checkbox"/> Translation services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nutrition services
Service Delivery Setting	Program Funding	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hospital <input type="checkbox"/> Dental school <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community/safety net clinic <input type="checkbox"/> Private dental office <input type="checkbox"/> Long-term care facility <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senior center/community center <input type="checkbox"/> Private residence <input type="checkbox"/> Fairgrounds/stadium/parking lot <input type="checkbox"/> Church <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School <input type="checkbox"/> Homeless shelter <input type="checkbox"/> Public housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Foundation/organization grant <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public funding (e.g. local, state, federal) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private donations (e.g. individuals, businesses)	

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