

# Workforce Innovations in Oral Health

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Presented by: Jean Moore, DrPH  
Margaret Langelier, MSHSA  
Bridget Baker, ABD

Center for Health Workforce Studies  
School of Public Health | University at Albany, SUNY

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# The Center for Health Workforce Studies at the University at Albany, SUNY

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- Based at the University at Albany School of Public Health
- Conducts studies of the supply, demand, use and education of the health workforce
- Committed to collecting and analyzing data to understand workforce dynamics and trends
- Goal to inform public policies, the health and education sectors and the public
- Broad array of funders

# Today's Presentation

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- Oral health workforce research experience
- Making the case for oral health workforce research
- Key themes from our work
- Using research findings to inform workforce strategies to increase access to oral health

# Oral Health Workforce Research Experience

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- **The Professional Practice Environment of Dental Hygienists in the 50 States and the District of Columbia, 2001 (HRSA),**
- **Dental Hygiene Master File Project, 2006-08 (ADHA),**
- **White Paper, The Oral Health Workforce in the U.S. in 2010 (IOM), and**
- **The Oral Health Curriculum in Physician Assistant Education Programs (NccPA) 2014**

# Oral Health Workforce Research Experience: State Oral Health Care Access and Workforce Assessments

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- **New Hampshire (2011)**
- **North Dakota (2011-12)**
- **Maine (2012-13)**
- **Michigan (2014-15)**
- **Kentucky (2015)**

# Oral Health Workforce Research Center under a Cooperative Agreement with HRSA

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- **Year 1 Projects (2014-15):**
  - **Update the Professional Practice Index for Dental Hygienists in the 50 States and the District of Columbia,**
  - **Comparison of Medicaid Dental Claims Data in Two States with Different Adult Dental Benefits,**
  - **A Study of the Dental Assistant Workforce in the U.S. ,**
  - **Case Studies of Eight Federally Qualified Health Centers to Describe Oral Health Services Delivery and Oral Health Workforce Innovation, and**
  - **Case Studies of Oral Health Service Delivery Models Used in Long-term care Settings.**

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# Making the Case for Oral Health Workforce Research

# Increasing Evidence of Links Between Oral Health and Physical Health

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- **Periodontal disease and dental caries are associated with:**
  - **Coronary artery disease, including stroke and endocarditis,**
  - **Diabetes**
  - **Pre-term birth and infant mortality,**
  - **Systemic infections in patients with implants and joint replacements, and**
  - **Substance abuse.**



# Medical and Dental Services Tend to be Siloed

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- Different delivery systems
- Different insurance systems
- Limited communication between systems
  - EMRs don't interface with EDRs
  - Referral networks between physicians and dentists are limited
- FQHCs are a notable exception
  - Statutorily required to provide or refer for oral health services

# Oral Health Disparities Are Challenging

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- **Population-specific:**
  - The poor, minorities, including American Indians, children, people with special needs, the elderly, among others,
  - Oral health literacy is lower for groups with limited access to oral health services.
- **Geographic:**
  - Rural
  - Inner city urban

# Uneven Access to Oral Health Services is a Public Health Crisis

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- The most common (and preventable) chronic disease of childhood is dental caries
- Contributes to employability, productivity and lost time from work (adults) or school (children/adolescents)
- Manifested by an increasing number of costly ambulatory–care sensitive ED visits for oral health problems

# Key Access Barriers

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- **Oral health literacy**
- **Oral health provider availability**
  - Shortage/maldistribution
  - Willingness to treat Medicaid patients
  - Scope of practice limitations
- **Resources to pay for care**
  - Even those with dental insurance may be subject to high co-pays or limited service coverage
  - Limitations on Medicaid dental coverage, particularly for adults

# Key Themes Emerging from our Research

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What makes a positive impact on oral health access and the oral health of the population?

- Integration of oral health and primary care
- Workforce innovations
  - Primary care workforce providing oral health assessments
  - Expanded function dental hygienists and dental assistants
  - New categories of oral health workers, e.g., dental therapists, community dental health coordinators
- Team based approaches to oral health service delivery
- Local solutions to oral health access issues

# Case Studies of 8 FQHCs in 9 States: Strategies for Integrating Oral Health & Primary Care

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- Study findings from this research highlights all of the key themes
- FQHCs are uniquely positioned to provide integrated, patient centered health and oral health services
- FQHCs have exceptional opportunities to innovate, especially novel workforce that increase access to oral health services for underserved populations

# FQHCs Use Team Based Approaches to Delivering Oral Health Services

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- **The traditional dental team is the base**
  - Dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants
- **Primary care providers extend the team**
- **Oral health team innovations**
  - Public health dental hygienists
  - Community dental health coordinators
  - Dental therapists, Dental hygiene therapists
  - Expanded function dental assistants

# Dental Residents And Student Externs and Interns Contribute to FQHC Staffing

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- **FQHCs benefit from precepting dental residents and students**
  - Enhances capacity to meet demand for oral health services
  - An important tool for recruitment of new oral health professionals
    - Use incentive programs such as loan repayment
- **Students (dentists, DHs, and DAs) and residents benefit from rotations in FQHCS**
  - Increases awareness of the need for services among the underserved



# FQHC Oral Health and Primary Care Integration Strategies

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- **Integrated or interoperable electronic health and dental records**
- **Oral health assessment at medical intake**
- **BP checks and health histories at dental visits**
- **Requiring patients in the dental practice to also be primary care patients**
- **Scheduling oral health assessments by dental hygienists as part of annual pediatric well visits up to three years of age**

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# **Increasing Capacity of Primary Care Workforce to Conduct Oral Health Assessments**

# Survey of Physician Assistant Education Programs: Integrating Oral Health Assessment into Curricula

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- Survey found that 78% of PA education programs include specific curriculum on oral health and oral disease
- 93% provided didactic instruction and 60% also provided clinical training in conducting an oral examination and identification of oral disease
- 25% of respondents reported using inter-professional training opportunities with their students
- Future study will survey active PAs on barriers and facilitators of integrating oral health evaluation and examination into clinical practice

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# Expanded Function Dental Hygienists and Dental Assistants

# Updating the State-Specific Dental Hygiene Professional Practice Index (DHPPI) Scores

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- The Dental Hygiene Professional Practice Index (DHPPI) is a numerical scale that quantifies the SOP (i.e. the legal practice environment) for dental hygienists (DHs) in each state
- The DHPPI was developed in 2001
- Higher scores on the DHPPI are generally associated with broader sets of tasks, more autonomy (i.e. less direct oversight) and greater opportunities for direct reimbursement for dental hygienists (DHs)
- This project updated the state-specific DHPPI scores to reflect SOP in 2014

# Scope of Practice (SOP) for DHs Has Broadened in Many States

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- High scoring states in 2001 remained high scoring in 2014
- Some states noticeably advanced DH SOP
  - Montana moved from a satisfactory ranking in 2001 to excellent in 2014
- Some states lost ground in comparison to their previous rankings
- More states recognize public health practice for dental hygienists permitting provision of preventive services under general supervision or unsupervised and without prior examination by a dentist

# Does SOP Matter?

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- **Conditions for practice affect patients' access to services**
- **In 2001, the DHPPI was significantly correlated with a number of indicators of utilization of oral health services and oral health outcomes**
- **In 2014, multi-level modeling found a significant relationship between a broad scope of practice for DHs and positive oral health outcomes in state population**

# Existing Scale May Not Accurately Assess Current Ideal Practice for DHs

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- Variables in the Index were developed in 2001
- Some states have achieved near perfect scores in 2014 using the 2001 index
- Need to update and account for expanded tasks and allowable restorative services
- Critical elements a new scale might include:
  - The ability to supervise dental assistants (some services require two handed dentistry)
  - Provision of basic restorative services that benefit from dental oversight, supervision, and consultation
  - The ability to provide local anesthesia without direct supervision for certain periodontal procedures



# Dental Assisting Workforce Study Findings

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- Limited data sources on dental assistants (DAs)
- DAs characterized by variability:
  - Multiple educational pathways into dental assisting, from OJT to formal dental assisting training programs
  - Variation in state requirements for DA training, titles, and allowable tasks; e.g. identified over 40 titles based on tasks, training and qualifications

# Expanded Function Dental Assistants (EFDAs)

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- **EFDA is an emerging DA classification**
- **Permitted to perform more complex tasks:**
  - Preventive functions - coronal polishing, fluoride varnish, sealant application
  - Restorative functions – placing and finishing dental restorations, creating temporary crowns
- **Signs of increasing state-level standardization for EFDAs, including requirements for education/training, competency testing, and certifications**
- **Using EFDAs on oral health teams is believed to contribute to greater capacity and efficiency for dental providers**

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# State and Local Strategies to Expand Access to Oral Health Services

# Workforce Innovations in Maine

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- Enabled several types of dental hygiene practice including traditional dental hygiene, public health dental hygiene, independent practice dental hygiene, and dental hygiene therapy
- The dental hygiene therapist is permitted to perform some restorative functions
- Expanded function dental assisting is allowed
- Dental hygienists in expanded roles can bill Medicaid directly
- Maine has a medical initiative, Into the Mouths of Babes, that trains primary care providers to screen and place fluoride in the mouths of young children

# Strategies to Expand Oral Health Access in Michigan

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- Michigan has enabled a robust public health dental hygiene program
  - Approximately 200 dental hygienists work in 50 public health programs providing services in clinics, mobile dental vans, migrant farm worker programs, among others.
  - DHs in this program annually treat tens of thousands of safety net patients
- Michigan has contracted with Delta Dental to manage all dental services for Medicaid eligible children in the state through the Healthy Kids dental program
  - The program has received national attention because of the sustained increased utilization of dental services by children

# Local Solutions in Michigan

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- **Points of Light** – linking pediatricians and community dentists willing to treat children through a web based application that permits referral in real time
- **Altarum Project** – uses a state immunization surveillance system to build a referral network for oral health services
- **Calhoun County** – pay it forward oral health initiative that engages community social service providers, dentists, and patients in earning points to receive oral health treatment services
- **Michigan Community Dental Clinics** – a consortium of approximately two dozen county and regional departments of health that created the largest group dental practice in the state

# Local Solutions in California

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- **Virtual Dental Home**
  - permits registered dental hygienists in advanced practice to screen, assess, and seek dental consultation about children's oral health treatment needs
  - Demonstration prompted passage of legislations to pay for teledentistry services

# Local Solutions in Kentucky

## North Fork Valley Community Health Center

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- **An Appalachian initiative**
- **A consortium between the University of Kentucky School of Medicine and a local FQHC**
- **Uses a mobile dental van (Ronald McDonald Charities)**
- **Provides screening, assessment, and treatment services in conjunction with a fixed clinic at an FQHC for more complex services**



# Using Oral Health Workforce Research to Inform Programs and Policies

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- **Who are the stakeholders?**
  - **Federal government**
  - **State planners and policy makers**
  - **Health and oral health professionals**
  - **Health care providers and their associations**
  - **Consumer advocates**
  - **Oral health coalitions**
  - **Educators**
  - **Patients**

# Resources

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The following reports are posted to the Oral Health Workforce Research Center website at

<http://www.oralhealthworkforce.org/resources/ohwrc-reports-briefs/>

- Baker B, Langelier M, Moore J, Daman S. *The Dental Assistant Workforce in the United States, 2015*. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany; October 2015.
- Langelier M, Moore J, Baker BK, Mertz E. *Case Studies of 8 Federally Qualified Health Centers: Strategies to Integrate Oral Health with Primary Care*. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany; September 2015.

# Resources (con't)

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The following reports are posted to Center for Health Workforce Studies website at <http://chws.albany.edu/reports/>

## **Oral Health Curriculum in Physician Assistant Education Programs**

- Langelier MH, Glick AD, Surdu S. Adoption of Oral Health Curriculum by Physician Assistant Education Programs in 2014. *J Physician Assist Educ.* 2015;26(2):60-69.

## **2001 Dental Hygiene Scope of Practice Study**

- The Professional Practice Environment of Dental Hygienists in the 50 States and the District of Columbia, 2001

<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/supplydemand/dentistry/dentalhygieneenvironment.pdf>

# Resources (con't)

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The following state-specific reports are posted to Center for Health Workforce Studies website at

<http://chws.albany.edu/reports/>

## Michigan

- Langelier M, Surdu S. *Oral Health in Michigan*. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany; June 2015.

## Maine

- Langelier M and Continelli T. *Report of the Survey of Dental Safety Net Providers in Maine*. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany. December 2012.
- Langelier M, Moore J, and Continelli T. *The Oral Health Workforce in Maine*. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany. December 2012.

# Resources (con't)

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## Maine (con't)

- Langelier M and Moore J. *Executive Summary of the Report of Interviews of Oral Health Stakeholders in Maine*. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany. November 2012.
- Langelier M and Surdu S. *Assessment of Oral Health Delivery in Maine: An Analysis of Insurance Claims and Eligibility Data for Dental Services, 2006-2010*. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany. September 2012.
- Langelier M, Moore J, Surdu S, and Armstrong D. *Oral Health in Maine, A Background Report*. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany. January 2012.

## New Hampshire

- Langelier M, Armstrong D, and Continelli T. *Oral Health in New Hampshire: A Chartbook for the New Hampshire Oral Health Access Strategy Workgroup*. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany. July 2011.

# Questions?

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**For more information,  
please contact us at 518-402-0250 or by email.**

Jean Moore, [jean.moore@health.ny.gov](mailto:jean.moore@health.ny.gov)

Margaret Langelier, [margaret.langelier@health.ny.gov](mailto:margaret.langelier@health.ny.gov)

Bridget Baker, [bridget.baker@health.ny.gov](mailto:bridget.baker@health.ny.gov)