

The History of Introducing a New Provider in Minnesota A Chronicle of Legislative Efforts 2008-2009

The effort to establish a “mid-level” oral health provider in Minnesota began in early 2008 when legislation was introduced to establish the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner (ADHP). The ADHP model, developed by American Dental Hygienists’ Association, is a Master’s level educated dental hygienist with additional clinical and practice skills to provide care at a level between that of a dentist and dental hygienist.

Minnesota’s Safety Net Coalition (SNC), a coalition that brings together a host of health care stakeholders who advocate for policies that make health care more accessible to underserved populations, took the lead in advocating for the ADHP legislation. The legislation in 2008 was supported by more than 40 organizations, including the Minnesota Dental Hygienists’ Association (MnDHA) and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU). The MnSCU system includes Metropolitan State University, the institution slated to have the first Master’s program in the country based on the ADHP educational model.

The 2008 ADHP legislation resulted in a compromise agreement to establish the Oral Health Practitioner (OHP) in state statute. ADHP supporters as well as the Minnesota Dental Association (MDA) and the University of Minnesota’s School of Dentistry agreed upon the OHP compromise. As part of the compromise legislation, the OHP provider and a basic scope of practice were put into state statute and an OHP Workgroup was established to make recommendations on the educational, licensure, and supervision requirements for the new provider.

The Workgroup was comprised of 13 oral health stakeholders, including representatives from MnDHA, MDA, the SNC, and the University of Minnesota’s School of Dentistry. The Workgroup met throughout the latter half of 2008. Their final recommendations were drafted in a report issued by the Minnesota Department of Health (<http://health.state.mn.us/healthreform/oralhealth/index.html>). In February 2009, legislation based on the Workgroup’s recommendations was introduced in both the House and Senate.

Rather than supporting the proposed OHP legislation, the MDA opted to introduce legislation establishing a Dental Therapist, educated at the University of Minnesota’s School of Dentistry. The School of Dentistry came forward with the proposal for a Dental Therapy program in spring 2008 as the OHP compromise was hashed out. Hence, in early 2009, two pieces of legislation establishing new oral health providers were live in the Minnesota House and Senate—the bill further defining the OHP and the bill establishing the Dental Therapist. The OHP legislation called for a provider that could administer a wide range of clinical services, including basic restorative services and extractions, who could administer care without a dentist on site. The Dental Therapist bill envisioned a provider that would offer a more limited set of services and would require a dentist to remain on site. Both bills included provisions to limit the new providers’ practice to settings that focus on underserved populations.

By March 2009, support for the OHP legislation in the state swelled to more than 50 organizations. A host of patient-focused groups within the state as well as some national entities like the Pew Center for the States’ Oral Health Initiative, the American Public Health Association, and the American Association of Public Health Dentistry, supported the OHP.

After considerable negotiation, another legislative compromise was reached in May 2009. The compromise took aspects from both the OHP and Dental Therapy bills to establish a new oral health provider in the state which upon the sponsoring legislators and issue stakeholders, including the SNC, MnDHA, MDA, MnSCU, and University of Minnesota's School of Dentistry, could agree.

The result was legislation establishing a Dental Therapist and Advanced Dental Therapist. The Dental Therapist language essentially outlines practice for a provider educated under the University of Minnesota's model, which would develop a provider to offer some basic preventive services, limited restorative services, extractions of primary teeth, and have limited prescriptive authority. Dental therapists will be able to administer a number of services without the dentist onsite, but all restorative services, extractions, and services that are more involved would require the presence of a dentist. The Dental Therapist would be a graduate of an approved Bachelors or Master's education program and would work under a collaborative management agreement with a dentist.

The Advanced Dental Therapist provision facilitates a Master's level educated provider who is licensed to practice as a Dental Therapist and will have a more advanced scope of practice. Advanced Dental Therapists will evaluate, assess and treatment plan, perform non-surgical extractions of permanent teeth, and administer all services of a Dental Therapist without the requirement for onsite supervision. Like Dental Therapists, Advanced Dental Therapists will work with a supervising dentist via a collaborative management agreement.

The legislative compromise paves the way for students educated under the ADHP model at Metropolitan State University to be licensed and enter the workforce as Advanced Dental Therapists. The Metropolitan State program builds on the dental hygiene education model by requiring that students of the Masters program be licensed dental hygienists prior to entry. That program, which is structured on the ADHP Competencies developed by ADHA, will develop the providers who have the full preventive skill set of a dental hygienist in addition to the Advanced Dental Therapist skill set.

Both Metropolitan State's and the University of Minnesota's programs are slated to begin in the fall of 2009. The first practitioners could begin practice as early as 2011.

For additional information about the effort in Minnesota, please see the following links:

- [Full text of Senate File 2083](#)
- [Metro State/Normandale ADT Program](#)
- [ADHP Competencies](#)
- [University of Minnesota School of Dentistry Dental Therapy Program](#)
- [OHP Workgroup Report/Recommendations](#)
- [Minnesota Public Radio Story](#)

Timeline to a New Provider in Minnesota

From the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner to the Oral Health Practitioner to the Dental Therapist/Advanced Dental Therapist—the effort to establish a new oral health provider has resulted in a number of name changes and involved many stakeholders. The following is a timeline offering perspective on the various events that led to the final passage of legislation to establish the Dental Therapist/Advanced Dental Therapist in the state.

2006

- Metropolitan State University in St. Paul, MN approves development of an Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner Master's program – the first in the country

2007

- The Minnesota Safety Net Coalition decides to support the ADHP concept and advocate for ADHP legislation in 2008 legislative session

2008

February

- Sen. Ann Lynch and Rep. Cy Thao introduces legislation to establish the ADHP
- The Minnesota Safety Net Coalition takes the lead in advocating for the bill, representing more than 40 organizations in support of effort

April

- University of Minnesota's School of Dentistry Dental Therapist program unveiled
- Oral Health Practitioner (OHP) legislative compromise agreed to by all issue stakeholders
- Compromise removes "ADHP" name, replaces with neutral OHP moniker
- Compromise establishes scope of practice for new provider; clinical skills mirror skill set outlined in ADHP Competencies
- Compromise establishes Oral Health Practitioner Workgroup to make recommendations to state legislature on OHP education, licensure, and supervision

May

- OHP legislative compromise language signed into law

August – December

- OHP Workgroup assembled
- 13 members – 8 dentists/5 others; all major issue stakeholders have spot on the Workgroup
- Workgroup convened in series of 8 meetings to develop specific OHP Recommendations

December

- OHP Workgroup final recommendations release in a report authored by the Minnesota Department of Health
- Legislation based on recommendations contained in OHP Workgroup report is drafted

2009

March

- Oral Health Practitioner legislation introduced by Sen. Ann Lynch and Rep. Cy Thao
 - o Based on OHP Workgroup recommendations
 - o Would enable graduates of both ADPH and Dental Therapy education programs to become licensed as an OHP
 - o Supported by more than 50 organizations in state
 - o National entities also support effort, including Pew Center for the States' Oral Health Initiative, the American Public Health Association, the American Association of Public Health Dentistry, and ADHA
- Dental Therapist legislation introduced
 - o Legislation would allow for Dental Therapist provider only, not OHP/ADHP models
 - o Supported by Minnesota Dental Association, University of Minnesota's School of Dentistry, and Minnesota Dental Assistants Association

April

- OHP and Dental Therapist legislative language combined into one bill
- Bill would enable both provider models to move forward
- OHP proponents do not oppose effort

May

- Legislative compromise reached among OHP and Dental Therapist stakeholders
 - o Compromise results in yet another name change – from Oral Health Practitioner to Dental Therapist (DT) and Advanced Dental Therapist (ADT)
 - o Compromise creates two levels of Dental Therapist Practice:
 - Dental Therapist: Educated under University of Minnesota School of Dentistry Model
 - Range of preventive, restorative clinical services
 - Onsite supervision required for most services
 - Advanced Dental Therapist: Educated under ADPH educational model at Metropolitan State University
 - Clinical skills include all of DT scope in addition to some advanced clinical skills
 - Onsite supervision not required
 - Additional state board of dentistry education models could also be approved for DT/ADT practice
 - o Compromise legislation passes House and Senate on May 13

Fall

- Metropolitan State Advanced Dental Therapist Master's program, based on ADHP Competencies, slated to begin in fall
- University of Minnesota School of Dentistry Bachelor's and Master's Dental Therapist programs slated to begin in fall

2010 and Beyond...

2011

- Initial graduates from ADT program at Metropolitan State University projected to enter Workforce

2011-2014

- Minnesota Board of Dentistry will conduct evaluation of the impact of the DT/ADT Providers
- Evaluation will include assessment of where providers practice, services administered, quality of care, and other facets of practice

2014

- Minnesota Board of Dentistry required to report evaluation findings to Minnesota State Legislature

2015

- The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) voted to implement the accreditation process for dental therapy education programs.