



# EXPAND ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE WITH DENTAL THERAPY

**Nearly one in three Floridians don't have access to dental care - dental therapy can help**

**Dental therapists are mid-level oral health care professionals** that work under supervision of a licensed Florida dentist to provide the basic dental care that many Floridians can't get today – exams, fillings, and simple extractions. Dental therapists graduate from an American Dental Association CODA-accredited dental therapy educational program and **complete the exact same licensing exam as dentists** for the procedures they perform.

**Dental therapists have practiced for 100 years worldwide** in public and private settings in 50 countries and in the U.S. for about 20 years. Every published study (approximately 1500) found they expand access to safe, high quality care. A total of 14 states have already authorized dental therapists to expand access to dental care.

## SUPPORT DENTAL THERAPY LEGISLATION TO EXPAND ACCESS IN FLORIDA

- Allow the state to license qualified dental therapists, expanding access statewide.
- Require all dental therapists to graduate from an approved education program before being licensed.
- Require dental therapists to work under the supervision of a Florida dentist and perform services limited to their accreditation standards set forth by American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA).



## Florida can't wait - we need dental therapy now

- **Poor oral health is linked to several diseases and chronic conditions** such as diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney disease, low birth weight babies, systemic infections and even death. Florida's oral health crisis is among the worst in the nation.
- **65 of 67 Florida counties are designated as Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas**, affecting more than 7 million Floridians.
- **1,536 more dentists are needed RIGHT NOW** to remove these shortages. That number grows every day.
- **Florida ranks last** among U.S. states for the percentage of children who have had a dental health visit in the last 12 months.
- Children especially suffer from untreated dental conditions. **Bullying, anxiety, depression and low-self esteem** are common.

## Address unmet oral health needs and provide huge health system savings

- Evidence shows dental therapy **prevents expensive ER visits caused by untreated dental issues, improves overall health, and provides huge cost savings** to the entire health system.
- Florida hospitals charged **over a half billion dollars (\$550,000,000) for ER and hospital admissions in 2021** for temporary relief (antibiotics and pain pills) of preventable dental issues.
- Roughly **10 Floridians EVERY DAY were admitted to hospitals** in 2021 with life threatening conditions from untreated dental disease.
- On average, **over \$45 billion (\$45,000,000,000) of work productivity is lost each year** in the United States due to untreated oral disease. As the 3rd most populated state, Florida accounts for a good chunk of this lost productivity.
- **Less than one in five Florida dentists accept Medicaid patients.** Dental therapists provide cost savings, meaning dental offices employing therapists can serve more people, including those on Medicaid.

Learn More: [floridiansfordentalaccess.org](http://floridiansfordentalaccess.org)

## SUPPORTERS OF EXPANDING ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE THROUGH DENTAL THERAPY

A broad coalition of more than 300 health and dental groups, dentists, health professionals, children's advocates, educators and consumers support expanding dental access to all Floridians. Here are just a few of them:



## DENTISTS

Dr. Robert Blaksha, DDS, Dr. Shannon English, DDS, Dr. Paul Sohi, DDS, Dr. Giang Vu, DDS, Dr. Patricia Wilson, DDS, Dr. Allen Hindin, DDS, Dr. Marcy Borofsky, Dr. William Witt, DDS, Dr. Michelle Galloway, DDS, Dr. Claudia Simoza, DDS, Dr. Shelly Taylor, Dr. Timothy Garvey, Dr. Rachel Equihua, DMD, Dr. William Martin, DMD, Dr. Olga Ensz, Dr. Patrick Weaver, Dr. Brett Ryan, DMD, Dr. Ashley Hopkins, DMD, Dr. Frank Catalanotto, DMD, Dr. Baha Qablawi, Dr. Ralph Urbino, Dr. Carlos Piedra, Dr. Ron Elinoff, Dr. Loyce A. Jones, Dr. Oscar Arevalo, Dr. Donna Bridge, Dr. Geraldine Edrei, Dr. Naved Fatmi, Dr. Elizabeth Orr, Dr. Gregg Stewart, Dr. Mark Davis, Dr. Jason Hirsch, Dr. Tamara-Kay Tibby, Dr. Nilsa Toledo

## FAQ

**Will dental therapists perform “irreversible surgical procedures” and is it safe for them to do so?**

Dental therapists are educated and trained to the same standard and pass the exact same licensing exam as dentists on the procedures they perform. This includes “irreversible procedures” such as extracting badly diseased baby teeth. All under the supervision of a Florida licensed dentist. All published studies document their quality, safety and cost effectiveness.

**What happens if there’s a medical emergency while a dental therapist is performing a procedure?**

Medical emergencies are rare. However, dental therapists are trained to handle emergencies in the same manner as dentists. The current protocol for a dentist with a patient experiencing a medical emergency is to stop and call 911. Dental therapy education programs have the exact same accreditation standards as dentists for safety and emergency management.

**Do dental therapists perform root canals or partial root canals?**

No. Root canals and partial root canals, called pulpectomies, are NOT performed by dental therapists. Only a Florida licensed dentist may work on the root or nerve of a tooth.