

What is SB2354?

This bill will create an Advanced Practice Dental Hygienist (APDH)

What is an APDH and how will this help ND?

Advanced Practice Dental Hygienist (APDH)

- A registered dental hygienist who has completed additional training, approved by the ND State Board of Dental Examiners, and receives a certification to work as an Advanced Dental Hygienist.
- APDHs can do preventive care like hygienists, but are also educated to provide a limited set of the most common procedures that dentists can currently do—such as filling cavities.
- APDHs must enter into a written collaborative management agreement with a ND dentist to define how the APDH can operate within that dentist’s practice.

How Advanced Practice Dental Hygienists (APDH) Can Help

- Untreated dental disease could be reduced if people had access to routine care—before they end up in expensive emergency rooms.
- Training hygienists to build on their preventive scope of practice and do some routine restorative care like filling cavities has increased access to care in other states like MN.
- ND’s proposal classifies this “hygiene plus” model as an “advanced practice dental hygienist” (APDH).
- An APDH’s scope of practice is approximately 75% preventive and 25% restorative.
- Because APDH’s are trained to do a much smaller number of procedures, they have a lower salary than dentists—lowering the cost per unit of care provided.
- Even for the uninsured, practices can use lower cost providers to provide care to more patients in a more affordable way.ⁱ
- Using general supervision and telehealth technology—allowing dentists to supervise staff from a different site—can allow these practitioners to bring care directly to patients in nursing homes, schools, assisted living centers, and even patient’s homes.
- Apple Tree Dental in MN is a hub-and-spoke model that uses these types of dental practitioners to provide care to seniors in nursing homes and assisted living centers.ⁱⁱ

What This Bill Will Do

- Allow dentists and nonprofit dental clinics and programs to hire “advanced practice dental hygienists” (APDHs) to expand care to more people.
- Give tribal health systems more flexibility by allowing them to hire APDHs as well as other types of dental providers that already practice in other states.
- APDHs are always supervised by dentists. Dentists have the option to supervise them from off-site using telemedicine.
- APDHs cannot practice independently of dentists under any circumstance.
- APDHs must complete a rigorous educational program, complete 2,000 hours of practice under the supervision of a dentist, and pass an examination to demonstrate their competence.
- APDHs can work in community settings such as federally qualified health centers, nursing homes, schools, etc.
- APDHs may also work in private practice dental offices, provided they focus 25% of their time on underserved patients—including the uninsured or those on Medicaid.

To learn more about North Dakota’s problems with dental access, we encourage you to visit www.nddentalaccess.com. You may also visit nddha.org for additional education materials on the benefits of an Advanced Practice Dental Hygienist.
