



Tribal Dental Therapy Law in Connecticut

Tribes in Connecticut: Mashantucket Pequot Tribe of Connecticut, Mohegan Indian Tribe of Connecticut

Tribes in Support of Dental Therapy in Connecticut: No Tribes in Connecticut have passed resolutions of support.

Status: Law Enacted

Legislation: [Senate Bill 807](#)

Sponsor: Joint Committee on Public Health

Legislative History:

02/06/2019 Introduced in Senate, Referred to Joint Committee on Public Health
03/01/2019 Approved in Committee with Substitute
05/09/2019 Passed Senate on a [Vote of 28-6](#)
06/04/2019 Passed House of Representatives on a [Vote of 106-42](#)
06/28/2109 Signed into Law by Governor Lamont

Summary:

- Establishes the licensing process for dental therapists (DTs) in the state of Connecticut.
- Allows licensed DTs to practice under a dentist as part of an oral healthcare delivery team.
- Enumerates services and procedures a licensed DT can perform.
- Requires a 1000 hour preceptorship, and six hours of Continuing Education every two years.
- Allows dentists to require stricter supervision or a more limited scope of practice within the collaborative agreement.
- Requires DTs to work in a public health facility, which includes among other settings: inpatient hospitals and outpatient clinics, long term care facilities, schools, and state agency facilities.
- Allows dentists to hire up to two DTs, and allows DTs to supervise dental assistants and hygienists.
- Allows DTs to administer nonnarcotic medication under terms of the collaborative agreement.

Tribal Inclusion: S.B. 807 does not explicitly include Tribal health facilities in its definition of “public health facility”; however, that definition is broad enough to include most if not all health



facilities in the state and allows for temporary dental clinics to facilitate mobile oral healthcare services.

General or Direct Supervision: A 1000-hour preceptorship must be completed under a dentist's direct supervision (dentist is present in the room). Following that, supervision can be direct or general (dentist is available for remote consultation) under the terms of each dentist's collaborative agreement with the DT.

Educational Requirements: The bill does not explicitly state education standards beyond requiring the DT to have graduated from a program accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). CODA mandates a three academic year program for DTs with no degree requirement.

Dual License Requirement: A licensed DT is **REQUIRED** to hold a dental hygienist license.

Medicaid Reimbursement: The legislation allows for dental therapists to bill for third party reimbursement, including through the state's Medicaid program.

Moving Forward: This is the first year that Connecticut General Assembly has considered dental therapy legislation, and its passage is a sign that more states are interested in implementing the innovative provider model based off of success in Alaska Native communities.

Unfortunately, Connecticut's bill places a barrier to licensure that will limit the Tribes' ability to utilize dental therapy for themselves. By requiring a dental hygiene license, which is not a recommendation from CODA, the bill will prevent dental therapy from being a viable career path for many American Indians and Alaska Natives living in the state, a population severely underrepresented in dental and dental hygiene schools. Additionally, a hygiene license increases the amount of time and resources Tribes must invest in training programs. DTs educated under the CODA-approved standards have worked successfully in Alaska and have provided previously unavailable career paths for Tribal community members.

The legislation also does not offer reciprocity for DTs licensed by another state or Tribe or certified by the federal government. Finally, 1000 hours of preceptorship (nearly six months of full time employment) is burdensome for supervising dentists. The purpose of a preceptorship is for the DT to demonstrate competence in each procedure under his or her scope of practice. The 400-hour preceptorship (10 weeks of full time employment) approved by CODA is sufficient for a dentist to determine a DT's capabilities. Future legislation should address these issues.