



Tribal Dental Therapy Law in Michigan

Tribes in Michigan: Bay Mills Indian Community, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Hannahville Indian Community, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, Match-e-be-nash-she-wish Band of Pottawatomis Indians of Michigan, Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians

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

Status: Signed into Law

Legislation: [Senate Bill 541](#)

Sponsor: Sen. Mike Shirkey (R-16)

Legislative History:

9/07/2017	Introduced in Senate, Referred to Senate Committee on Health Policy
10/10/2017	Reported Favorably out of Committee without Amendment
10/11/2017	Passed Senate on a Vote of 21-15
10/11/2017	Referred to House Committee on Health Policy
12/05/2018	Reported Favorably out of Committee with Amendment
12/18/2018	Passed House on a Vote of 68-41
12/19/2018	Passed Senate on a Vote of 23-15
12/28/2018	Signed into Law by Governor Snyder

Summary:

- Establishes the licensing process for dental therapists (DTs) in the state of Michigan.
- Allows licensed DTs to practice under a dentist as part of an oral healthcare delivery team.
- Requires a 500 hour preceptorship, and 35 hours of Continuing Education every two years.
- Allows dentists to require stricter supervision or a more limited scope of practice within the Written Practice Agreement.
- Allows dentists to hire up to four DTs, and allows DTs to supervise dental assistants and hygienists.



- Enumerates settings in which a DT can practice, including Tribal and Urban Indian health programs, Federally Qualified Health Centers, schools, clinics and mobile programs serving underserved populations, and any setting in a dental shortage area.
- Five years after enactment, two dental therapists are appointed on the Michigan Board of Dentistry.
- Seven years after enactment, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services will conduct a study on the impact of dental therapists in the state.

Tribal Inclusion: Section 16654(d) allows a dental therapist to practice in outpatient Tribal health programs and facilities, as well as Urban Indian Organizations. The section also allows dental therapists to practice in Hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Dental Shortage Areas, school-based health centers, mobile units, and settings providing care for underserved populations.

General or Direct Supervision: A 500-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 Written Collaborative Management Agreement with the DT.

Educational Requirements: The bill does not explicitly state education standards beyond requiring the DT to have graduated from a postsecondary 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 does **NOT** need also 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: Governor Snyder signed the bill into law before leaving office at the end of 2018. Before the state can begin granting licenses to dental therapists, it must finalize rules governing Medicaid reimbursement and other issues. As of early 2021, the state was nearing the end of this process. [Supplemental legislation](#) removing a requirement that supervising dentists within a dental therapy education setting be licensed specifically by the state of Michigan was removed, allowing dental therapists educated outside the state to move and practice more seamlessly.

Overall, the new law is favorable to Tribal adoption of dental therapy, with few barriers that would weaken the workforce model's potential for reducing Michigan Tribes' unmet oral health needs.