



Tribal Dental Therapy Law in Oregon

Tribes in Oregon: Burns Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, Coquille Tribe of Oregon, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians, Klamath Tribes, Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribes

Tribes in Support of Dental Therapy in Oregon: Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians and the Coquille Tribe of Oregon have worked in support of dental therapy.

Status: Law Enacted

Legislation: [S.B. 738](#), 2011 Regular Session

Sponsors: Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-25)

Legislative History:

02/18/2011 Introduced in Senate, Referred to Health Care, Human Services, & Rural Health Policy Committee
03/02/2011 Hearing Held, Public Testimony Accepted
04/28/2011 Amended, Voted out of Committee with Do Pass recommendation
06/17/2011 Passed Senate on a vote of [16-14](#)
06/22/2011 Passed House of Representatives on a Vote of [52-5](#)
08/02/2011 Signed Into Law by Governor Kitzhaber

Summary:

- Establishes pilot projects for oral health to operate in certain sites for three to five years.
- Requires the Oregon Health Authority to gather data related to dental health access.
- Allows alternative workforce providers, including dental therapists (DTs), to participate in the pilot projects under a dentist.

Tribal Inclusion: Tribes are authorized to submit applications for these pilot projects. Two Tribes and one Urban Indian Health Organization have been approved and are currently employing DTs, collecting data, and reporting results to the Oregon Health Authority.



General or Direct Supervision: Supervision can be general (dentist is available for remote consultation) under the terms of each pilot project site's application with the Oregon Health Authority.

Educational Requirements: The bill does not explicitly state education standards for DTs working in the pilot projects. At the Tribal pilot sites, the DTs have been educated in Alaska's Ilisagvik College, which follows standards approved by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). CODA mandates a three academic year program for DTs with no degree requirement.

Dual License Requirement: The legislation does not require dental therapists at the pilot projects also to be licensed dental hygienists.

Medicaid Reimbursement: Services conducted during the pilot projects are authorized to bill for third party reimbursement, including through the state's Medicaid program.

Moving Forward: The Oregon Health Authority's pilot project period has been extended to 2025. The two Tribes and one Urban Indian Health Organization can continue with dental therapy until that time. As part of the law, these pilot projects are reporting data to the Oregon Health Authority ranging from number of operations performed to patient satisfaction to wait times between scheduling an appointment and being seen.

In the future, the Oregon Legislature will evaluate the data and consider making dental therapy permanent and statewide. Opponents of dental therapy have been attempting to set up roadblocks to prevent this from happening. They have continually tried to slow the process for Tribal pilot site approval, and have asked the Oregon Health Authority to change its evaluation criteria for the Tribal pilot project sites.

Once the Oregon Health Authority presents its data to the legislature, and with support from Tribes, the legislature may consider permanent statewide authorization for DTs to practice. In that instance, Tribes may work to ensure that the legislation follows the Alaska model as closely as possible to ensure Oregon Tribes are able to use dental therapists.