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Regulatory Counsel
Department of State
P.O. Box 69523
Harrisburg, PA 17106-9523

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Dear Regulatory Counsel Members,

We have reviewed the proposed amendments to the practice sites for Public Health Dental Hygiene Practitioners (PHDHPs) in Pennsylvania and offer support for the proposed additions.

As you know, Pennsylvania is considered to be one of the most "rural" states in the nation, with almost 3.5 million residents living in areas that are designated as rural. The economic, cultural, social, geographic, and demographic characteristics of rural communities are sufficiently different from those of urban communities to require special consideration. Rural areas are characterized by sparse populations and geographic barriers, and by populations that are generally older, sicker, and poorer than their urban counterparts. The demographic, geographic, economic, and quality of life issues unique to rural areas can have a significant impact on the health status of rural Pennsylvanians.

Expanding practice locations to include private settings of hospice and home-bound patients; primary care settings (especially pediatric settings); and childcare settings will increase access to care for rural residents by expanding service delivery sites. Many rural counties are designated as Dental Health Provider Shortage Areas (DHPSAs). Expanding the allowable practice sites for PHDHPs will permit patients to access preventive dental health services closer to home. Travel to access care and the barriers associated with such travel will be limited to annual dental examinations and restorative services. Increased access to preventive dental hygiene services will have a positive impact on the systemic health of rural residents. Routine preventive dental hygiene care and a healthy periodontium can decrease the risks associated with many systemic conditions including diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Thank you for your consideration of this comment and please contact us at 814-863-8214 if you require additional information.

Sincerely yours,

Kelly Braun

Kelly Braun
Dental Delivery System Coordinator

Lisa Davis

Lisa Davis
Director and Outreach Associate Professor
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