



## Washington **DENTAL ACCESS** Campaign

**Support access to oral health care.  
Authorize dental therapy in Washington.**

### **We're facing an urgent need for healthcare**

Right now, our state is facing a new crisis with the COVID-19 pandemic, placing enormous pressure on our existing health system and threatening to worsen health inequities. Now more than ever, Washingtonians need access to critical healthcare. Over the next few months you will be called upon to make difficult decisions to address the state's \$8.8 billion budget deficit. Policy experts, health professionals, and community advocates urge you to put into place policies that are cost-effective, innovative, evidence-based and work to erase the inequities in oral health care faced by too many Washingtonians.

### **Dental Therapy: a proven solution for expanded care**

Dental therapists are critical to expanding access to dental care where it is most out of reach, providing timely, quality care to rural, low-income communities and communities of color, and to patients who have coverage through Apple Health or are uninsured.

Just this year, the American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), which accredits all U.S. education programs for dentists and dental hygienists, granted accreditation to the Alaska Dental Therapy Education Program--where dental therapists working for Washington Tribes were educated. This program is where the dental therapists who are currently working

*Over 40 organizations have come together in support of authorizing dental therapy in Washington, including:*

*Children's Alliance*

*Community Health Center Association*

*Health Coalition for Children and Youth*

*League of Women Voters*

*MomsRising*

*Sea Mar Community Health Centers*

*SEIU Healthcare 775NW*

*SEIU Healthcare 1199NW*

*SW Washington Communities United for Change*

*Statewide Poverty Action Network*

*UFCW 21*

*Washington Community Action Network*

*Washington State Budget & Policy Center*

*Washington Dental Hygienists' Association*

*Washington State Labor Council*

*Washington State Senior Citizens' Lobby*

on tribal lands in Washington were educated. It is yet another form of official recognition that dental therapists are delivering innovative, high-quality, community-based health care.

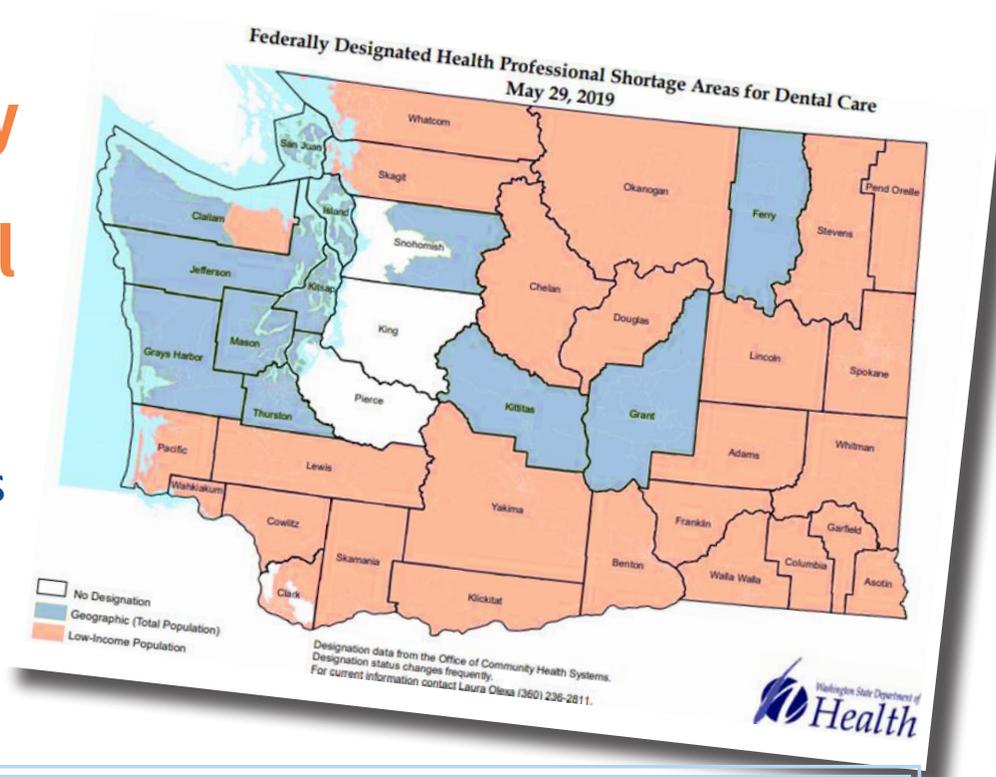
## What is Dental Therapy?

Dental therapists are primary oral health care providers that deliver routine preventive and restorative care to those who need it most. The profession was first introduced to the United States in 2005 and in 2015, the American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) established national standards for dental therapy education programs. Dental therapists are already working in Washington for the Colville Tribes, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Lummi Nation, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, and Tulalip Tribes.

**Hear directly from dental therapists about the work they do!** ([Video 1](#), [video 2](#), and [video 3](#).)

**For too many Washington families, oral health care is out of reach.**

37 out of 39 counties have too few dental professionals to meet local needs.



## Oral Health Facts

- Dental problems are the #1 reason people without insurance visit the ER, costing WA taxpayers \$35 million annually.
- 85% of the services dental therapists provide are routine and preventive to curb painful and costly treatments.
- According to a March 2019 poll, 62% of Washington voters support dental therapy.



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