
Wisconsin Legislative Council

ACT MEMO



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February 7, 2024

2023 Wisconsin Act 87
[2023 Senate Bill 689]

Licensure of Dental Therapists

2023 WISCONSIN ACT 87

The act provides for the licensure of dental therapists by the Dentistry Examining Board (board). The act requires the board to grant a dental therapist license to an individual who satisfies certain criteria, including completion of a qualifying dental therapy education program and passage of required examinations.

Dental Therapy Education Programs

A dental therapy education program qualifies if the program is any of the following:

- Accredited by the American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA).
- A program approved by the Minnesota Board of Dentistry on or before February 2, 2024, that has, as of the time of application, become CODA-accredited.
- A program offered in Wisconsin that has received initial CODA accreditation but is not yet fully CODA-accredited.

With respect to dental therapy education programs offered in Wisconsin, the act allows applicants to obtain a license on the basis of graduation from such a program only for four years after the program's inception, and if the program is not fully CODA-accredited by the time that four-year period has elapsed, the act requires the licenses of dental therapists who graduated from the program to be revoked. If the program subsequently becomes accredited, the board may allow reinstatement of a revoked license.

Employment Limitations

Dental therapists may provide dental therapy services only as an employee of certain specified employers and only under the supervision of a dentist who is either similarly employed or who directly employs the dental therapist. The dental therapist must have a collaborative management agreement with a dentist that addresses various aspects of the dental therapist's practice and supervision, including, among other things, practice setting, conditions or limitations on services that may be provided, a quality assurance plan, and various other protocols.

Subject to the terms of a collaborative management agreement and what was covered in their dental therapy education programs, dental therapists are limited to providing services, treatments, and procedures that are specified in the act, as well as additional services, treatments, or procedures specified by the board by rule.

Dental therapists may initially provide dental therapy services only under the direct or indirect supervision of a qualifying dentist. Once a dental therapist is licensed and has provided dental therapy services for at least 2,000 hours, the dental therapist may provide services under the general

supervision of a qualifying dentist. However, the level of supervision for a dental therapist may be further limited under the terms of a collaborative management agreement.

Dental therapists must also either limit their practice to federally defined dental shortage areas or practice in settings where at least 50 percent of their patient base consists of patients who are any of the following:

- Medical Assistance patients.
- Uninsured patients.
- Patients receiving dental care at free and charitable clinics.
- Patients receiving dental care at federally qualified health centers.
- Patients who reside in long-term care facilities.
- Veterans.
- Patients who are members of a federally recognized Indian tribe or band.
- Patients receiving dental care at clinics or facilities located on tribal lands.
- Patients with medical disabilities or chronic conditions that create barriers of access to dental care.

Other Provisions

The act requires a dental therapist to complete 12 hours of continuing education each biennium, and subjects dental therapists to, or covers dental therapists under, various other laws, including the health care records law, the volunteer health care provider program, the health care worker protection law, and the emergency volunteer health care practitioner law.

The act also makes dental therapists eligible to receive loan forgiveness under the health care provider loan assistance program.

Effective date: February 2, 2024, except that the requirement that the Governor must, to the extent possible, appoint a dental hygienist who is also a licensed dental therapist to the board does not take effect until 50 individuals are actively licensed as a dental therapist, or on the first day of the sixth year beginning after publication, whichever occurs first.

For a full history of the bill, visit the Legislature's [bill history page](#).

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