

NEBRASKA

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DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Pete Ricketts, Governor

Clerk of the Legislature
Nebraska State Capitol
PO Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Reader:

05 July 2022

The evaluation of the 2021 Nebraska Public Health Authorization Dental Services Report is attached. The dental data contained in this report was obtained through a survey of Nebraska's 161 registered dental hygienists with a Public Health Authorization (PHA) and was conducted by the Health Professional Tracking Service at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, College of Public Health. The evaluation of the report results was performed by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Office of Oral Health and Dentistry.

This evaluation is in response to the Nebraska legislative request (LB§ 38-1130 4 2020 update) for the Department to provide an annual report to the Board of Dentistry and the State Board of Health and to "annually evaluate the delivery of dental hygiene services in the state and, on or before September 15 of each year beginning in 2021, provide a report electronically to the Clerk of the Legislature regarding such evaluation."

The report evaluation highlights the function of this unique professional workforce (which annually averaged almost 100,000 dental disease prevention services from 2017 to 2019) for people across the lifespan throughout Nebraska, often through local health department programs. These evidence-based services include topical fluoride and dental sealants that can reduce dental decay up to 60% and are significantly less costly than repairing cavities.

The current evaluation notes an increase in the number of NE registered dental hygienists with a PHA in 2021 and an increase in services provided compared to 2020. But they still had limited ability to offer services, likely due to the lingering negative effects of the pandemic which closed many children centers, school and older adult facilities. It is my professional opinion that the report and evaluation emphasizes the need to further increase the utilization of this critical oral health workforce and to open new opportunities for expansion into even more underserved population areas within Nebraska now that the COVID-19 virus transmission has been lowered.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Charles F. Craft
Nebraska DHHS
State Dental Health Director

2021 Nebraska Public Health Authorization Dental Services Report

One hundred and sixty-one (161) registered dental hygienists (RDH) were mailed questionnaires regarding usage of the Public Health Authorization (PHA) during 2021. The 161 included RDHs who held a PHA during 2021. Twenty permits lapsed during 2021.

Of the 161 RDHs sent questionnaires, 100 responses were received, reflecting a 62.1% response.

Thirty-one (31) RDHs reported providing services in 2021, indicating that 19.3% of RDHs who held a PHA during 2021 utilized the permit. Services were provided in 72 of the 93 counties in Nebraska.

Services were provided in the following locations (number of RDHs reporting this location type):

- Nursing Facility (2)
- School-Based Preventative Health Program (19)
- Federal, State or Local Public Health Department or Clinic (5)
- Community Health Center (3)
- Tribal Clinic (1)
- Other –
 - Head Start (9)
 - WIC (2)
 - Daycare and/or Preschool (2)
 - Other (3)

No services were reported in the following allowable settings: Assisted Living, Correctional Facility and Hospital.

Provided services are broken down by age range as seen in the tables below.

2021 Preliminary Charting and Screening Breakdown by Age				
Total: 23764				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	5565	15790	1726	683

2021 Oral Health Education to Recipient Breakdown by Age				
Total: 18854				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	3284	13198	1797	575

2021 Oral Health Education to Caregiver Breakdown by Age				
Total: 2898				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	2193	605	0	100

Oral Health Education provided in Group Settings: 191 presentations total.

The total number of workshops provided in 2021 was 154. Age information was not included.

The total number of in-service trainings provided in 2021 was 37. Age information was not included.

2021 Oral Prophylaxis Breakdown by Age				
Total: 3395				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	502	1086	1221	586

2021 Polish Exposed Tooth Surfaces and Restorations Breakdown by Age				
Total: 1723				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	215	634	611	263

2021 Brush Biopsies Breakdown by Age				
Total: 0				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	0	0	0	0

2021 Pulp Vitality Testing Breakdown by Age				
Total: 0				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	0	0	0	0

2021 Gingival Curettage Breakdown by Age				
Total: 410				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	0	10	350	50

2021 Removal of Sutures Breakdown by Age				
Total: 4				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	0	2	2	0

2021 Topical Fluorides Breakdown by Age				
Total: 17004				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	4258	11442	867	437

2021 Dental Sealants Breakdown by Age				
Total: 12041				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	5970	5987	84	0

2021 Other Topical Agents Breakdown by Age				
Total: 2451				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	647	1650	144	10

2021 Impressions for Study Casts Breakdown by Age				
Total: 50				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	0	0	25	25

2021 Radiographic Exposures Breakdown by Age				
Total: 3925				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	322	1422	1359	822

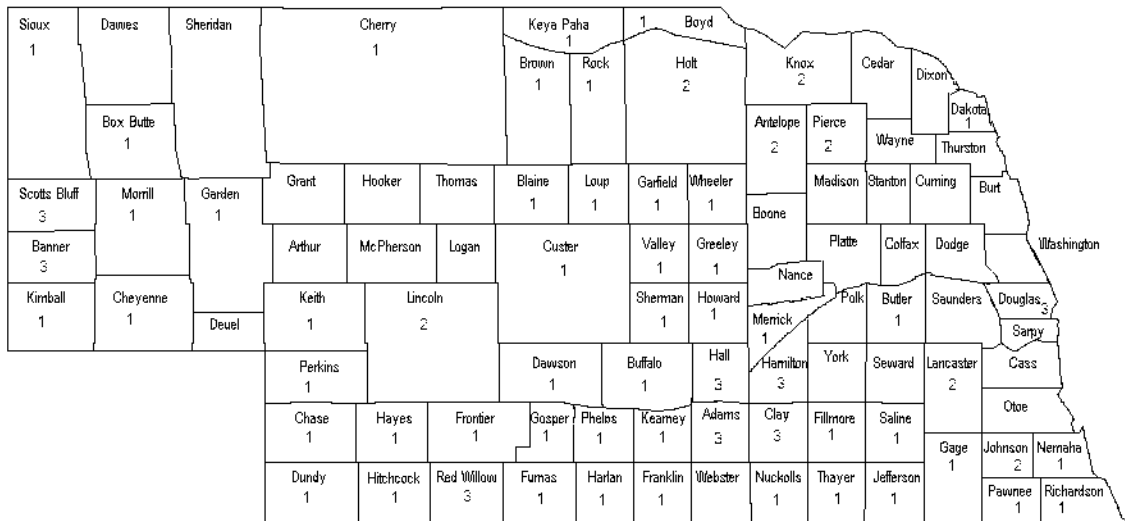
2021 Interim Therapeutic Restoration Breakdown by Age				
Total: 4				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	4	0	0	0

2021 Prescriptions for Mouth Rinses and Fluorite Products Breakdown by Age				
Total: 1				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	0	1	0	0

2021 Minor Denture Adjustments Breakdown by Age				
Total: 14				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	0	0	1	13

2021 Advised Patient - Breakdown by Age				
Total: 23587				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	5498	16324	1168	597

Public Health Authorization



End of Year 2021

Counties supported - 31 Dental Hygienists holding a Public Health Authorization identified using permits in 72 Nebraska counties. This represents 77% of Nebraska counties served by Public Health Hygienists.

Health Professions Tracking Service
University of Nebraska Medical Center
June 2022

2021 Nebraska Public Health Authorization Dental Services Report
Evaluation Analysis
Dr. Charles F. Craft Dental Director
DHHS Office of Oral Health and Dentistry
05 July 2022

Background: Nebraska registered dental hygienists have been able to obtain a public health authorization since 2007. The public health authorization (PHA) allows registered dental hygienists to provide certain preventive, educational, and referral services for children and adults in community settings. The type and number of these services are annually collected through a survey conducted by the Health Professional Tracking Service (HPTS) at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, College of Public Health. Collected dental service and demographic information is entered into a yearly Nebraska Public Health Authorization Dental Services Report which is reviewed by the DHHS Office of Oral Health and Dentistry (OOHD). The following is an evaluation of the public health registered dental hygienist (PHRDH) workforce and the services they reported in Nebraska for the year 2021.

PHA dental services are performed around the state and provided across the lifespan in childcare centers, elementary schools, and older adult locations. Preventive care, such as dental cleanings, topical fluoride applications and protective sealants are some of the most effective, low cost, evidenced based approaches to reducing overall dental decay rates. A 2015-16 oral health survey, conducted by the OOHD, found that 64% of Nebraska children have already experienced dental disease. Many NE PHRDHs utilize their authorization by working with their local public health departments to provide these approved services.

The OOHD coordinates a statewide program in 12 health departments called “Nebraska Teeth Forever” that successfully mobilizes many of these PHRDHs in rural areas and greatly increases underserved patient access to preventive care. However, starting in 2020, facilities were often closed to outside visitors due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. This emergency health crisis severely limited essential NE PHRDH care and resulted in a 53% reduction in the total number of reported services in 2020. Fortunately, in 2021, Nebraska these service numbers have greatly rebounded, almost to the pre-pandemic levels of 2017-2019.

2021 Status: PHRDH dental services reported in 2021 were compared to service numbers previously reported in 2020 and the significant trends are described below:

Positive Trends:

- The total number of registered dental hygienists with a PHA increased in 2021 from 128 to 161
- The percent of NE counties served increased in 2021 from 58% to 77%
- The total number of services increased in 2021 from 46,075 to 86,538
- Total dental screenings increased in 2021 from 14,613 to 23,764
- Total oral hygiene education increased in 2021 from 13,981 to 18,854
- Total caregiver training increased in 2021 from 304 to 2,898
- Total dental cleanings increased in 2021 from 1,263 to 3,395
- Total topical fluoride applications increased in 2021 from 6,288 to 17,004
- Total other topical agents (SDF) increased in 2021 from 1,069 to 2,451
- Total dental sealants increased in 2021 from 8,217 to 12,041

- New services were authorized in 2021 to include Radiographic Exposures, StudyCast Impressions, Removal of Sutures, Gingival Curettage, Brush Biopsies and Polishing of Teeth and Restorations. These additional PHA services in 2021 totaled 6,112

Negative Trends:

- The survey response rate dropped in 2021 from 76% to 62%
- The number of PHRDHs providing services in 2021 decreased from 38 to 31
- The percent of PHRDHs providing services in 2021 decreased from 30% to 19%
- Total service locations decreased in 2021 from 66 to 46 sites
- Service locations for older adults in 2021 decreased from 12 sites to 2
- Other services previously authorized (Denture Adjustments, Interim Therapeutic Restorations and Prescriptions for Mouth Rinses & Fluoride Products) decreased in 2021 from 340 to 19

The number of active PHRDHs went down in 2021 from 38 to 31 and the number of site locations also decreased from 66 to 46. However, the final number of services provided actually went up from 46,075 to 86,538 in 2021. This figure approaches the average annual total from 2017-2019 of 97,709 services. It suggests that even with a smaller workforce and less service locations, the Nebraska PHRDHs were still able to produce outstanding results. Especially important are the topical fluoride services that reduce dental decay by 25-40%, and dental sealants that reduce dental decay by 60-80%.

These figures indicate that Nebraska may have recovered quicker than many other states that effectively closed-down preventive oral health services due to the pandemic restrictions. Most of the NE PHRDHs work directly with rural health departments who have developed honorable community reputations and have earned the trust of local principals, administrators, and parents/caregivers. As PHRDHs regained some access to schools in 2021, they put in extra effort to try and catch up on these critical preventive and educational services. However, access to older adult facilities is still very limited and greater attention should be given to reaching back out to this vulnerable age group in 2022.

Conclusion: The 2021 report findings emphasize the value and determination of the Nebraska Public Health Hygienists. This small workforce was able to effectively overcome many challenges of COVID-19, but currently it is still vastly under-utilized. Of the 100 PHRDHs who responded to the survey, only 31 were able to provide services (19%). However, an additional 27 PHRDHs said they were very interested in providing this type of community care in the future. This Nebraska workforce should be supported and expanded into additional underserved areas of the state. Increased funding opportunities would stimulate further use of their proactive intervention services, which in turn can reduce overall general dental decay rates. Development of electronic service forms is also urgently needed to more effectively capture dental data that is currently being under-reported. This additional information would lend even more evidence to the overall need and value of this unique dental professional workforce to the people of Nebraska!

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Charles F. Craft
State Dental Health Director
NE DHHS Office of Oral Health