

# The Status of the Oral Health Workforce in Washington State

## Background

The University of Washington Center for Health Workforce Studies is conducting a study, funded by the Washington Dental Service Foundation, to answer key questions about the current and future status of Washington's oral health workforce.

The Great Recession and the Affordable Care Act have affected patients' access to oral health services, while the state's oral health workforce is also experiencing changes, including new and expanded educational programs, community health center and non-profit dental clinic expansion, provider consolidation, new provider types, and increasing engagement of primary care medical providers to deliver oral health prevention services.

## Study purpose and method

This study aims to provide new information about the supply, distribution and characteristics of Washington's oral health workforce to inform workforce planning by educators, administrators, policymakers, legislators, practitioners, and other stakeholders. Key information will be gathered about:

- The overall supply, distribution, demographics, and practice characteristics of Washington's dentists
- The dentist educational pipeline, including training in underserved locations
- Dentists' provision of care to patients insured by Medicaid and the uninsured
- Characteristics of pediatricians and family physicians providing oral health services

The proposed study design relies on both existing data sources and new survey data. Project activities include:

- Review of published reports and articles on national and statewide oral health issues
- Key informant interviews of Washington state experts in health care and oral health
- Surveys of dentists, pediatricians, and family physicians licensed in Washington state
- Analysis of Washington licensure data on dentists, family physicians, and pediatricians

## Progress to date

- ✓ Review of literature
- ✓ Completed 22 key informant interviews, currently drafting report on interview findings
- ✓ Dentist and physician surveys in the field September - October, 2016

## Upcoming milestones

- Preliminary findings: November 2016
- Final report: January 2017

## Project team

Davis Patterson, PhD, Principle Investigator, 206.543.1892, [davis@uw.edu](mailto:davis@uw.edu)  
Holly Andrilla, MS  
Lisa Hager, MHA  
Susan M. Skillman, MS

Survey contractor: Washington State University Social & Economic Sciences Research Center