

# Dental Therapy Toolkit

POTENTIAL EMPLOYER INTERVIEWS

May, 2016

# Acknowledgements

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# Potential Employer Interviews

MAY, 2016

*To get a better understanding of the challenges and barriers to hiring and fully integrating dental therapists and advanced dental therapist into oral health teams, potential employers were interviewed. This document summarizes the methods used to select and reach out to potential employers and conduct interviews, the employers that responded to interview requests, the questions that were asked of employers, and the findings from the interviews.*

## Conducting Potential Employer Interviews

### Methods

Overall 11 potential employers responded to a phone interview or an online survey for this toolkit. A multi-pronged strategy for outreach was used including personal outreach from toolkit team members, survey information in the Minnesota Oral Health Coalition newsletter, and outreach conducted by the Minnesota Dental Therapy Association. Potential employers who filled out the online survey could remain anonymous if they preferred. Clinic sizes ranged from 1 to 7 dentists practicing, the average number of dentists practicing in these clinics was 4. The number of patients served by the respondents ranged from 1,000 to 33,000 and the percent on Medical Assistance ranged from 0-100% of the total patient population.

### Potential Employers Interviewed

**TABLE 1: PRACTICE TYPE AND LOCATION OF POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS INTERVIEWED, APRIL-MAY 2016**

	Practice Location	Number of Participants
Private Practice	Metro	<b>3</b>
Private Practice	Greater	<b>1</b>
Non-Profit	Metro	<b>1</b>
FQHC	Greater	<b>1</b>
Large Group Practice	Metro	<b>4</b>
Public Health	Metro	<b>1</b>

## Interview Questions

Questions were developed based on common inquiries to the education institutions, taking into consideration the findings from the current employer and DT/ADT interviews conducted for this toolkit and suggestions from the Minnesota Department of Health in order to gather data necessary and relevant to complete this toolkit. Whether contacted by phone or electronically, the same questions were asked of all respondents.

- 1 Please describe your practice:
  - a Rural or Metro
  - b Practice type (non-profit, private practice, large group, hospital, education institution, FQHC, other- please specify)
  - c Number of dentists (full or part time)
  - d Estimated number of patients
  - e Percent of patients on MA or MNCare
- 2 Have you considered hiring a DT or ADT?
  - a If yes, what are the reasons you did not? (mark all that apply)
    - i Unsure of scope of practice and other laws and regulations
    - ii Unsure of sustainability of the model
    - iii Unsure how they fit into a dental team
    - iv Unsure if the profession financially makes sense for our clinic
    - v Don't serve enough MA/MNCare patients to meet the minimum for DT/ADT regulation
    - vi Have heard things from colleagues that made me not want to hire a DT or ADT
    - vii There weren't any DTs/ADTs available to hire
    - viii Other- please specify
  - b What sources of information did you use in making your decision not to hire a DT or ADT? (mark all that apply)
    - i Minnesota Board of Dentistry
    - ii University of Minnesota School of Dentistry
    - iii Metropolitan State University, Normandale Community College, or MNSCU
    - iv Colleagues from another practice
    - v Financial analysis (please explain)
    - vi Other- please specify
- 3 Do you have additional or unanswered questions regarding DT/ADTs? (mark all that apply)
  - a Scope of practice
  - b Integration into dental team
  - c Collaborative Management Agreement
  - d Reimbursement
  - e Scheduling
  - f Other- please specify

- 4 Is there anything else you want to add regarding the potential hiring of a dental therapist or advanced dental therapist?

## Summarized Findings

Overall potential employers seem to be most concerned with the financial implications and sustainability of the DT/ADT model. Although the general conversation around dental therapy seems to be changing, there are still some concerns around the quality of work and trusting DT/ADTs with the scope of work outlined in statute. Among potential employers there is some confusion around the dental therapy profession, including differences between DTs and ADTs.

### Reasons Potential Employers did not Hire a DT/ADT

The three most common responses for why employers did not hire a DT or ADT were:

- Unsure of sustainability of the model;
- Unsure if the profession financially makes sense for our clinic; and
- Do not serve enough MA/MNCare patients to meet the minimum for DT/ADT regulations

Other responses, with less frequency, included:

- Unsure of scope of practice and other laws and regulations; and
- Have heard things from colleagues that made me not want to hire a DT or ADT

The other options were not selected by any potential employers. Other barriers potential employers expressed included a lack of confidence in clinical skills, confusion around the DT profession, and concerns with the quality of work of DT/ADTs.

### Sources of Information used by Potential Employers

Potential employers sought information from all of the options outlined in the survey. The Board of Dentistry, the education institutions and financial analyses were the top sources of information. Some potential employers consulted colleagues from another practice, but this source was used less often than others. Other sources of information potential employers reported using were the American Dental Association, the Pew Charitable Trust, relying on the DTs they were interviewing for positions, or conducting internal research.

### Additional Unanswered Questions

Additional questions potential employers had ranked in the following order from most frequent responses to least:

- 1 Reimbursement
- 2 Integration into oral health team

- 3 Collaborative Management Agreement
- 4 Scope of Practice
- 5 Scheduling (no respondents chose this option)

Additional unanswered questions that potential employers added include:

- Financial constraints: will hiring a DT/AT increase productivity and profitability
- Concerns about the quality and patient's perception of the profession
- Information on training to educate non-Minnesota trained dentists.

## Other Information

Many of the potential employers had additional comments about the dental therapy profession, easing the hiring process, and integrating DT/ADTs into their practice. Their comments included:

- Letters of recommendation for recent or upcoming graduates from the education institution that highlight the strengths of DT candidates would be useful.
- Remaining concerns about the amount of time it takes for new graduates to complete procedures and become efficient.
- Several employers expressed the need for increased reimbursement rates to support the work of dental therapists and other oral health professionals serving MA and MNCare patients.
- Despite barriers and concerns, potential employers do see the need for the field of mid-level dental providers.
- Reported areas of concern: overhead, liability, and productivity/compensation.
- There is a need for additional information to educate staff (dentists, assistants, hygienists) and the community to understand, appreciate and buy into the profession.
- We heard from several potential employers having the threshold at 50% MA patients is a barrier, some suggested reducing the requirement to 25%.