

# The Facts

## *Registered Dental Practitioner*

House Bill 2280

Senate Bill 192

Kansas has a serious problem when it comes to access to dental care, especially in rural areas of the state. In fact, 91 Kansas counties do not have enough dentists to serve their population. With the average dentist in Kansas approaching retirement age, this problem will only get worse. But, we can create our own solution in Kansas – by creating a new member of the dental team, the Registered Dental Practitioner (RDP). Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners have helped address the medical workforce shortage in rural areas, and Registered Dental Practitioners can do the same for the dental workforce.

### *Education*

RDPs in Kansas will be Registered Dental Hygienists who choose to obtain advanced training beyond their dental hygiene degree. The training program for RDPs will include intensive, hands-on experience to master their scope of practice.

Kansas is well-positioned to create training programs for this new career path. Across the state, there are five dental hygiene schools, potentially allowing RDPs to be trained close to the communities they will serve.

### *Supervision*

RDPs must be supervised by a dentist. There are two types of supervision levels under which RDPs may practice: direct and general. Under direct supervision, the RDP must practice in the same setting as the dentist. Under general supervision, the RDP may practice in a different setting after receiving permission from their supervising dentist. As part of general supervision, the dentist may limit what services the RDP may provide, and through a written supervision agreement the dentist and RDP will have protocols in place for unintended complications. All RDPs must work under direct supervision for at least 500 hours before being able to work under general supervision.

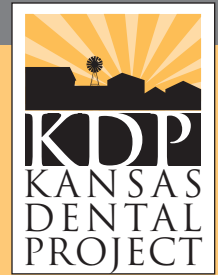
### *Scope of Practice*

The services that may be provided by an RDP include all services provided by Registered Dental Hygienists plus additional services, including fillings, cavity preparation, extractions of baby teeth, and extractions of already loose permanent teeth. The supervising dentist may limit the scope of an RDP under their supervision through the written supervision agreement.

RDPs will bring a valuable combination of skill to the dental team - they will be able to provide the education and preventative care of hygienists and basic restorative care needed to alleviate pain and treat dental disease.

### *Quality of Care*

Mid-level dental practitioners, such as RDPs, have been practicing in more than 50 countries for nearly 80 years and research shows they provide safe, high-quality care. In fact, there is no evidence to the contrary.



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## The Myths | The Facts

### **There is no access problem**

There is a well-documented access issue in Kansas when it comes to dental care. In Kansas, 91 of our 105 counties (86%) do not have enough dentists to serve their population, 14 of which have no dentist. All or a portion of each of these 91 counties have received a federal designation as a workforce shortage area. A new federal report determined it would take a minimum of 94 new dentists in Kansas to eliminate the shortage areas. Even in counties with enough dentists, vulnerable populations consistently have trouble finding care.

### **People just need to brush their teeth**

Certainly everyone has a personal responsibility to take care of their teeth, but the fact of the matter is that even people who brush every day need regular preventive care to avoid costly procedures and long-term health complications.

### **Charity care can solve the problem**

Charitable care performed by dentists is great, but it will not provide a systemic solution to a problem this large. Free dental clinics, such as the annual Mission of Mercy, provide much needed emergency dental care – sometimes extracting all of someone’s teeth. The truth is that this magnitude of care could be avoided if people had access to regular dental care.

### **Registered Dental Practitioners will be working independently**

RDPs will work under the supervision of a dentist; they will not practice independently. When working under the supervision of an off-site dentist, the dentist determines what services the RDP may provide.

### **Registered Dental Practitioners will provide a second tier of care**

Mid-level providers, like RDPs, provide the same quality of care as dentists; the only difference is what they are allowed to do. Mid-level practitioners have a narrower scope of practice, leaving the most complex procedures to dentists and oral surgeons. Research confirms that mid-level dental providers deliver safe, high-quality and competent care.

### **Allowing Registered Dental Practitioners to practice in Kansas won’t solve our access problem**

This legislation has been crafted to ensure that RDPs practice in areas of the state that have a shortage of dental providers. This has been addressed through geographic restrictions on where RDPs are allowed to practice, helping to ensure that those in greatest need are served.