

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1309

As of March 17, 2009

Title: An act relating to dental hygiene.

Brief Description: Regarding dental hygiene.

Sponsors: House Committee on Health Care & Wellness (originally sponsored by Representatives Green, Ericksen, Appleton, Hinkle, Morrell, Rolfes, Cody, Moeller, Chase, Conway, Kenney, Goodman, Nelson and Roberts).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/23/09, 92-0.

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/16/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: Unsupervised Practice of Dental Hygiene. A licensed dental hygienist is authorized to remove deposits and stains from the surfaces of teeth, apply topical preventative or prophylactic agents, polish and smooth restorations, perform root planing and soft-tissue curettage, and other dental operations and services delegated by a dentist. Generally speaking, a dental hygienist must be supervised by a dentist when performing these services.

One exception to this general rule is that a dental hygienist with two years of practical clinical experience within the last five years may provide dental hygiene operations and services without the supervision of a dentist when employed or retained by a health care facility, including a hospital, a nursing home, and a home health agency. Such a hygienist may only remove deposits and stains from the surfaces of teeth, apply topical preventative or prophylactic agents, polish and smooth restorations, and perform root planing and soft-tissue curettage.

Senior Centers. In 2007 the definition of "health care facilities" for purposes of allowing the unsupervised practice of dental hygiene was temporarily expanded to include senior centers. When providing services in a senior center, the dental hygienist must:

- enter into a written practice arrangement plan with a dentist who will provide off-site supervision;

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- obtain relevant information about the patient's health from the patient's primary care provider; and
- collect data on the patients treated and provide the data to the Department of Health (DOH) each quarter.

The provisions authorizing a dental hygienist to provide dental hygiene without supervision in a senior center expire on July 1, 2009.

Community-Based Sealant Programs. A licensed dental hygienist is authorized to assess for and apply sealants and fluoride varnishes for low-income, rural, and other at-risk populations in community-based sealant programs carried out in schools. In 2007 the services a dental hygienist is authorized to carry out in these programs were expanded to include removing stains from the surfaces of teeth. This expansion expires on July 1, 2009.

A dental hygienist providing services in a community-based sealant program must collect data on the patients treated under the program and provide the data to the DOH each quarter.

Summary of Bill: Unsupervised Practice of Dental Hygiene. The circumstances under which a dental hygienist with two years practical experience in the preceding five years may practice without the supervision of a dentist are expanded to include:

- when a dental hygienist is contracted by a health care facility to provide dental hygiene operations and services; and
- when a dental hygienist provides dental hygiene operations and services under a lease agreement with a health care facility.

Senior Centers. The definition of "senior center" for purposes of allowing the unsupervised practice of dental hygiene is changed. Instead of a "broad spectrum" of health, social, nutritional, and educational services and recreational activities, the center must only provide one or more of these services.

The requirement of reporting patient data to the DOH is terminated effective October 1, 2013.

The provisions that allow the unsupervised practice of dental hygiene in senior centers are made permanent, i.e., the expiration date is eliminated.

Community-Based Sealant Programs. The requirement of reporting patient data to the DOH is terminated effective October 1, 2013.

The provisions that allow dental hygienists to remove deposits and stains from the surfaces of teeth in community-based sealant programs are made permanent, i.e., the expiration date is eliminated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Preliminary outcomes from the pilot project created two years ago are awesome. We need the sunset clause removed so that practitioners can commit to practice. These kinds of programs reconnect seniors to dental care.

CON: We would prefer to extend the sunset period. This will still allow the hygienists to practice.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Green, prime sponsor; Anita Rodriguez, Allegiance of Dental Hygiene Practitioners; Colleen Gaylord, Melissa Johnson, Washington State Dental Hygienists Association.

CON: David Hemion, Washington State Dental Association.