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SENATE BILL 5323

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State of Washington

55th Legislature

1997 Regular Session

By Senators Deccio, Thibaudeau, Wood, Strannigan and Kohl

Read first time 01/23/97. Referred to Committee on Health & Long-Term Care.

1 AN ACT Relating to the certification of public health dental  
2 hygienists practicing among underserved populations; adding new  
3 sections to chapter 18.29 RCW; creating a new section; providing an  
4 effective date; and declaring an emergency.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that access to  
7 preventive oral health care services by low-income families and  
8 eligible medicaid recipients is currently restricted by supervision  
9 requirements for dental hygienists practicing within their existing  
10 scope of practice.

11 It is the intent of the legislature to provide access to and reduce  
12 the cost of preventive oral health care services provided by licensed  
13 dental hygienists to eligible medicaid recipients, low-income families,  
14 children, elderly persons, and other dentally underserved populations.  
15 In the absence of an adequate supply and distribution of dentists  
16 treating underserved populations, the provision of sealants and  
17 fluoride treatments by dental hygienists under general dental  
18 supervision is necessary in rural and underserved areas of the state.  
19 The legislature intends to create a special public health certification

1 for dental hygienists to provide access to these services to target  
2 populations.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) A dental hygienist licensed under this  
4 chapter may apply for certification by the department as a public  
5 health dental hygienist upon:

6 (a) Completion of the approved course of study developed under  
7 section 4 of this act;

8 (b) Establishment and maintenance of an acceptable practice  
9 protocol with a licensed dentist; and

10 (c) Compliance with administrative procedures, administrative  
11 requirements, and fees determined as provided in RCW 43.70.250 and  
12 43.70.280.

13 (2) Certification as a public health dental hygienist is subject to  
14 the provisions of the uniform disciplinary act, chapter 18.130 RCW, on  
15 the same grounds as a license for practice. However, any action taken  
16 by the secretary with regard to certification as a public health dental  
17 hygienist does not affect the license to practice, unless there is a  
18 separate action taken with regard to the license.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) Dental hygienists certified as public  
20 health dental hygienists under section 2 of this act may assess for and  
21 apply sealants and fluoride treatments under general dental supervision  
22 for clients in community clinics, migrant and community health centers,  
23 tribal clinics, and public health dental programs.

24 (2) A dental hygienist certified under section 2 of this act shall  
25 require that each patient for whom the dental hygienist performs dental  
26 hygiene service establish a dentist of record, if available, within  
27 twelve months of the first appointment with the dental hygienist.

28 (3) A dental hygienist certified under section 2 of this act shall  
29 establish a practice arrangement through a practice protocol with one  
30 or more dentists licensed in this state. The practice protocol entered  
31 into by the dental hygienist and a dentist must be signed by both  
32 practitioners and filed with the secretary and with the dental quality  
33 assurance commission.

34 (4) Practice protocols of a public health dental hygienist under  
35 general supervision by a licensed dentist include, but are not limited  
36 to, the following:

37 (a) Consultation;

- 1 (b) Referral to a dentist for dental care;
- 2 (c) Emergency procedures; and
- 3 (d) Other matters adopted by rule by the secretary.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The department of health, in consultation  
5 with the University of Washington school of dentistry and upon approval  
6 of the higher education coordinating board, shall develop an oral  
7 health assessment course of study to be required as additional training  
8 for licensed dental hygienists who apply for a dental hygienist public  
9 health certification. The course must include a training on the  
10 assessment of teeth and oral tissues among the underserved for the  
11 purpose of planning and administering appropriate preventive and  
12 disease control interventions within the scope of practice. The course  
13 must include dental caries assessment and management, current science  
14 about the importance of oral hygiene and the role of fluorides for  
15 maintaining proper oral health, oral cancer detection, and psychosocial  
16 conditions that impact a family's attitudes and behaviors about seeking  
17 dental services.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** The secretary of health shall review and  
19 make recommendations on the administration and operation of this act  
20 and report to the legislature by December 31, 1998, on the sufficiency  
21 of safeguards to protect the health and safety of patients and the  
22 effect on patient access to dental hygiene services and dental care.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** This act is necessary for the immediate  
24 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the  
25 state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect  
26 July 1, 1997.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** Sections 1 through 4 of this act are each  
28 added to chapter 18.29 RCW.

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