
Health Care Committee

HB 1253

Brief Description: Modifying provisions concerning dental hygienists.

Sponsors: Representatives Edwards, Campbell, Cody, Ruderman, Rockefeller, Kenney and Conway.

Brief Summary of Bill

- The scope of practice of licensed dental hygienists is increased to permit specified activities regarding anesthetics and analgesia; restorations; and the delegation of functions.
- A new provider category, the licensed dental hygienist - advance practice, is created to perform the same services as a licensed dental hygienist without the requirement of dentist supervision.
- Authority for dental hygienists is shifted from the Secretary of Health to a newly-created Board of Dental Hygiene.

Hearing Date: 2/11/03

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

There are 55 regulated health care professions in Washington. In most instances, these practitioners are subject to the regulatory authority of the Secretary of Health (Secretary), while others are regulated by one of the 16 health care boards and commissions. These organizations establish standards for credentialing and practice, issue credentials, process complaints, conduct investigations, and take administrative actions against health care providers engaged in unprofessional conduct. There are also nine advisory committees that work in cooperation with the Secretary to oversee various professions.

Dental hygienists perform dental services and operations under the supervision of a dentist including removing deposits and stains from the surfaces of teeth, applying topical preventative agents, and polishing and smoothing restorations. They are generally regulated under the authority of the Secretary except for matters related to licensing examinations

which are addressed in consultation with the Dental Hygiene Examining Committee.

Summary of Bill:

Licensed Dental Hygienists

In addition to their currently authorized activities, licensed dental hygienists may: (1) administer local anesthetic and nitrous oxide analgesia with the supervision of a dentist; (2) place restorations into cavities prepared by a dentist; and (3) carve, contour and adjust contacts and occlusion of the restoration with the close supervision of a dentist. As established in rule, licensed dental hygienists may delegate certain functions to unlicensed individuals to perform under close supervision.

Licensed Dental Hygienist - Advanced Practice

A new health care provider category, the licensed dental hygienist - advanced practice, is created. These practitioners must have a baccalaureate degree in dental hygiene or a related field from an approved institute of higher education. They may perform the same operations and services as a licensed dental hygienist with the addition of applying temporary cementation and placing permanent antimicrobials and antibiotics. Unlike licensed dental hygienists, they do not require dental supervision to provide these services. As established in rule, licensed dental hygienists may delegate certain functions to unlicensed individuals to perform under close supervision. The Board of Dental Hygiene may grant advanced practice status to licensed dental hygienists practicing in critical shortage areas.

Board of Dental Hygiene

The Board of Dental Hygiene (Board) is created consisting of five members appointed by the Governor. Four of the members shall be dental hygienists with at least five years of practice and one shall represent the public. Department of Health staff shall provide clerical and other assistance. Members of the Board shall be reimbursed \$50 per day of service as well as travel expenses.

The Secretary's authority with regards to dental hygienists is shifted to the Board. These powers include the authority to: (1) approve education programs and examinations; (2) establish rules and fees for renewal of licenses; (3) establish rules and procedures for preparing, conducting, and grading examinations and conducting reexaminations; (4) establish standards and fees for the approval of education programs; (5) grant licenses by endorsement; (6) establish continuing competency requirements; and (7) issue temporary licenses.

Repealed Sections

The Dental Hygiene Examining Committee and directions regarding its governance are repealed. Provisions allowing for the issuance of temporary licenses are repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 6, 2003.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.