

**RCW 70.350.010 Definitions.** The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Dental health aide therapist" means a person who has met the training and education requirements, and satisfies other conditions, to be certified as a dental health aide therapist by a federal community health aide program certification board or by a federally recognized Indian tribe that has adopted certification standards that meet or exceed the requirements of a federal community health aide program certification board.

(2) "Federal community health aide program" means a program operated by the Indian health service under the applicable provisions of the Indian health care improvement act, 25 U.S.C. Sec. 16161.

(3) "Indian health program" has the same meaning as the definition provided in the Indian health care improvement act, 25 U.S.C. Sec. 1603, as that definition existed on July 23, 2017. [2017 c 5 s 3.]

**Findings—2017 c 5:** "(1) The legislature finds that American Indians and Alaska Natives have very limited access to health care services and are disproportionately affected by oral health disparities. These disparities are directly attributed to the lack of dental health professionals in Indian communities. This has caused a serious access issue and backlog of dental treatment among American Indians and Alaska Natives. The legislature also finds that tribal leaders face a significant challenge in recruiting dental health professionals to work in Indian communities that results in further challenges in ensuring oral health care for tribal members.

(2) The legislature finds further that there is a strong history of government-to-government efforts with tribes in Washington to improve oral health among tribal members and to reduce the disproportionate number of American Indians and Alaska Natives affected by oral disease. One of the goals in the 2010-2013 American Indian health care delivery plan developed jointly by the department of health and the American Indian health commission is to improve the oral health of tribal members and the ability of tribes to provide comprehensive dental services in their communities. A critical objective to achieving that goal is "to explore options for the use of trained/certified expanded function personnel in order to increase oral health care services in tribal communities."

(3) The legislature finds further that sovereign tribal governments are in the best position to determine which strategies can effectively extend the ability of dental health professionals to provide care for children and others at risk of oral disease and increase access to oral health care for tribal members. The legislature does not intend to prescribe the general practice of dental health aide therapists in the state." [2017 c 5 s 1.]