

# Dental Therapists: An Innovative Approach to Expanding Access

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Hot Topics  
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# Community Catalyst

Community Catalyst is a national non-profit advocacy organization that works with national, state, and local consumer organizations; policymakers; and foundations to build consumer and community leadership to improve the health care system.

We support consumer advocacy networks that impact state and federal health care policy, and ensure consumers have a seat at the table as health care decisions are made.

# Oral Health Is Important to Overall Health.

**Yet tens of millions of Americans can't get the dental care they need.**

# CODA Background

- MN Dental therapy training programs and dental board requested that CODA explore accreditation standards
- Draft standards released in 2013
  - FTC comments
  - Community Comments
- Revised standards released in 2014
- 2000 comments submitted to CODA from communities of interest
- CODA adopted standards on February 6, 2015

# Standards

- Program length:
  - Educational programs should have the flexibility to determine the degree awarded to program graduates
  - Dental therapists to be trained in three academic years with advanced standing granted to dental hygienists and assistants
- Supervision:
  - Supervision levels should be set by states, but CODA removed restrictive language from past drafts that required direct supervision

# Standards

- **Scope of Practice:** The standards set a minimal scope of practice that includes evaluative, preventive and restorative functions but highlights that states have authority to add procedures. noting that education programs must provide education to support additional scope of practice.
- **Program Director:** The dental therapy program director must be a licensed dentist or a licensed dental therapist who possesses a master's degree or higher and must have a full-time administrative appointment as defined by the institution.

# Impact

Standards are an important step forward for dental therapy programs and efforts to establish the practice of dental therapy in states across the country.

- Training institutions will have national and streamlined standards to shape their training programs
- Students will have the ability to enter accredited programs and be eligible for financial aid
- Accreditation will be overseen by a national accrediting body rather than on a state-by-state basis
- Recognition of the need for dental therapy programs and the profession nationally

# Next Steps

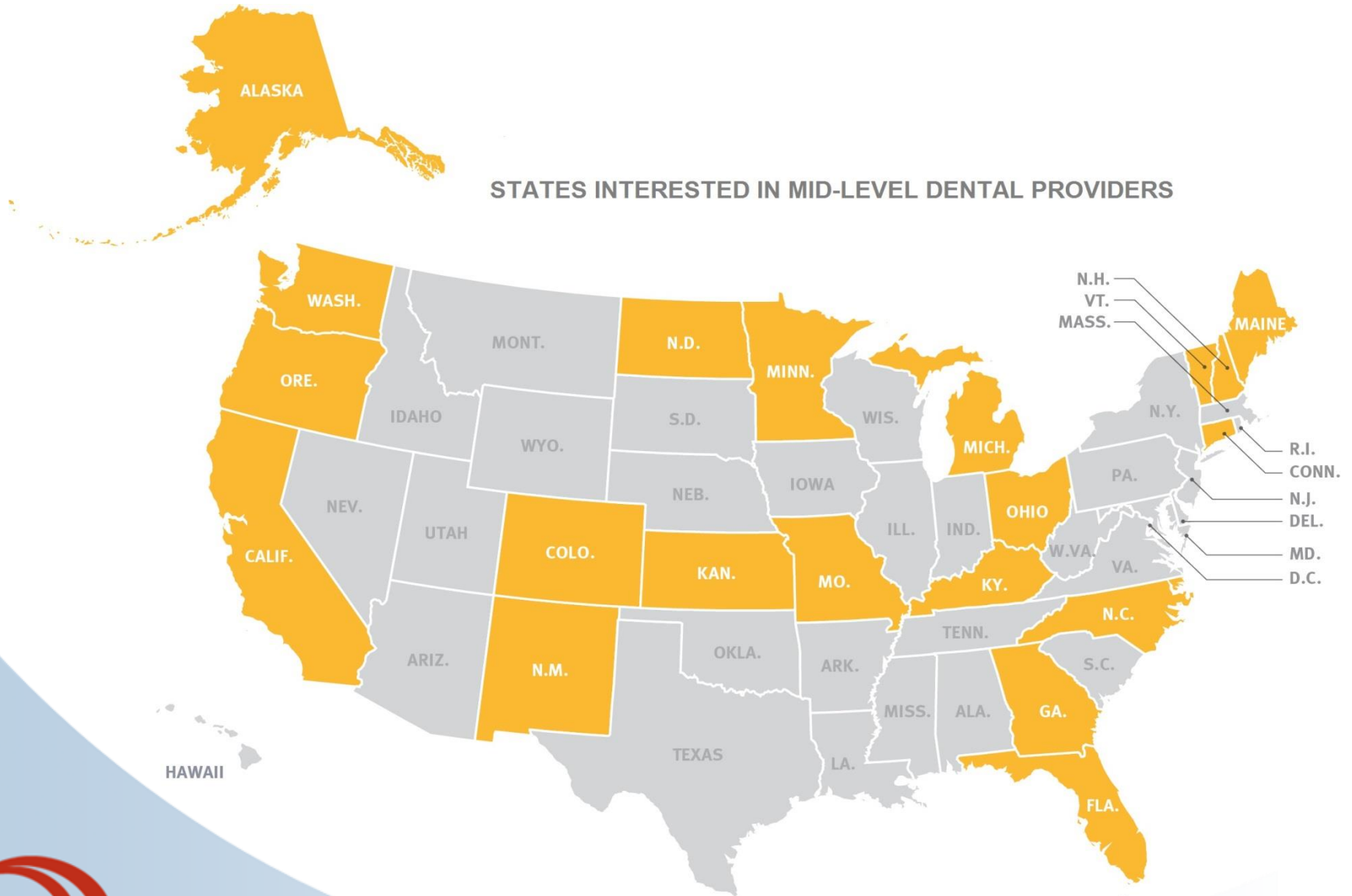
CODA voted that the Dental Therapy Standards will not be implemented until Criteria 2 and 5 of the Principles and Criteria Eligibility of Allied Dental Programs for Accreditation by CODA are met. The definitions of Criteria 2 and 5 are:

- Criteria 2: Has the allied dental education area been in operation for a sufficient period of time to establish benchmarks and adequately measure performance?
- Criteria 5: Is there evidence of need and support from the public and professional communities to sustain educational programs in the discipline?





# Increased Interest Across the Country



# Thank You

