



Dental Workforce Shortages: Virginia Leading the Way to Help Solve a Nationwide Crisis

The Issues

- While the Commonwealth is blessed with one of the highest concentrations of dentists in the country and remains one of the top states for net in-migration of early career dentists, **our population of dental hygienists is insufficient to meet current patient, employer and student demand for these positions.**
- The narrow pathway that currently exists for dental hygienists to become licensed in Virginia resulted in a year-over-year decline in that workforce last year, even as we have a present demand for 950 more dental hygienists statewide, according to federal Health Resources and Services Administration projections.
- As a result: Patients face long waits for preventative dental care and dentists are unable to practice at the top of their license as they spend more of their time in tasks previously assigned to other team members.

Next Steps to Help Address this Crisis

- The VDA Dental Workforce Council issued a report on the scope of this challenge and reviewed initiatives in peer states to address dental hygienist workforce shortages.
- The Virginia Community College System is internally evaluating options and costs of expanding these programs. **Funding must be increased for dental hygiene and assisting programs in order for them to continue and to expand.**
- We must collaborate with both public and private sectors to create new programs.

- We must continue to consider innovative proposals for the removal of unnecessary educational burdens that can help expedite more allied dental professionals into the workforce.
- **The VDA continues to engage in all of the above, and we ask for your support in the coming year to address this very serious crisis.**

Bottom Line

- Oral health impacts our overall health, and thousands of hours of work and school are lost each year in Virginia due to unplanned dental treatment.
- The current shortage is the result of policy decisions and will require policy solutions to change course.
- **The VDA is eager to work with members of the General Assembly to address this shortage and help all Virginians gain access to essential dental care.**

– By the Numbers –

25,900

**VIRGINIANS WORK
IN DENTAL OFFICES**

\$19,360

Median pre-enrollment earnings
of VCCS Healthcare Program
students with G3 assistance

\$81,400

Dental hygienists earn the highest median salary of two-year, in-demand healthcare programs offered through VCCS

Median salaries in severe shortage areas like Richmond (\$93,000) and Northern Virginia (\$107,000) are even higher

Please contact Laura Givens at givens@vadental.org
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