

Protocol for Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Dental Hygienists to Practice in an Expanded Capacity under Remote Supervision by Public Health Dentists

I approve the following protocol developed in response to the addition of Subsection E of § 54.1-2722. License; application; qualifications; practice of dental hygiene in Chapter 27 of Title 54.1 of the Code of Virginia.

As authorized by law, VDH is conducting a pilot program in three health districts, Cumberland Plateau, Lenowisco and Southside, to assess the use of dental hygienists employed by VDH in an expanded capacity as a viable means to increase access to dental health care for underserved populations. This protocol shall guide the pilot program.

Definitions:

- “*Expanded capacity*” means that a VDH dental hygienist provides education, assessment, prevention and clinical services as authorized in this protocol under the remote supervision of a VDH dentist.
- “*Remote supervision*” means that a public health dentist has regular, periodic communications with a public health dental hygienist regarding patient treatment, but has not done an initial examination of the patients who are to be seen and treated by the dental hygienist, and is not necessarily onsite with the dental hygienist when dental hygiene services are delivered.

Management:

- Program guidance and quality assurance shall be provided by the Division of Dental Health at VDH for the hygienists and dentists providing services under this protocol. Clinical oversight for the program will be provided by VDH public health dentist(s). The public health dentist(s) will be available to provide an appropriate level of contact, collaboration and consultation with the dental hygienist. At a minimum, communication will be maintained and documented by the hygienist reporting to the dentist at 14 day intervals.
- The protocol may be revised as necessary during the trial period through agreement of the committee composed of medical directors of the three health districts, staff from the Division of Dental Health and Office of Community Health Services, and representatives from the Virginia Dental Hygienists’ Association, Virginia Dental Association and Virginia Board of Dentistry. This committee shall meet and discuss program progress and any necessary revisions to the protocol at periodic intervals beginning July 1, 2009. The protocol and any revisions will be approved by the Commissioner of VDH.
- No limit shall be placed on the number of full or part time VDH dental hygienists that may practice under the *remote supervision* of a public health dentist(s) in the three targeted health districts.
- The dental hygienist may use and supervise assistants under this protocol but shall not permit assistants to provide direct clinical services to patients.

Remote Supervision Practice Requirements:

- The dental hygienist shall have graduated from an accredited dental hygiene school, be licensed in Virginia, employed by the Virginia Department of Health in a full or part time position, and have a minimum of two years of dental hygiene practice experience.
- The dental hygienist shall consent in writing to providing services under remote supervision.
- The patient or a responsible adult shall be informed prior to the appointment that no dentist will be present, that no anesthesia can be administered, and that only limited described services will be provided.
- Written basic emergency procedures shall be established and in place, and the hygienist shall be capable of implementing those procedures.

Expanded Capacity Scope of Services:

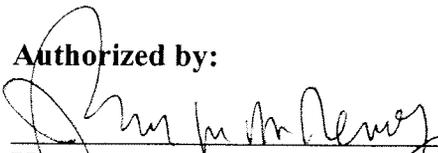
Public health dental hygienists may perform the following duties under *remote supervision*:

- An initial examination of teeth and surrounding tissues, including charting existing conditions including carious lesions, periodontal pockets or other abnormal conditions for further evaluation by a dentist, as required.
- Prophylaxis of natural and restored teeth.
- Scaling of natural and restored teeth using hand instruments, and ultrasonic devices.
- Assessing patients to determine the appropriateness of sealant placement according to VDH Division of Dental Health guidelines and applying sealants as indicated. Providing dental sealant, assessment, maintenance and repair.
- Application of topical fluorides.
- Providing educational services, assessment, screening or data collection for the preparation of preliminary written records for evaluation by a licensed dentist.

Required Referrals:

- Public health dental hygienists will refer patients without a dental provider to a public or private dentist with the goal to establish a dental home.
- When the dental hygienist determines at a subsequent appointment that there are conditions present which required evaluation for treatment, and the patient has not seen a dentist as referred, the dental hygienist will make every practical or reasonable effort to schedule the patient with a VDH dentist or local private dentist volunteer for an examination, treatment plan and follow up care.

Authorized by:



Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP
State Health Commissioner

7/22/09

Date