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

I approve the following revised 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, the Virginia Department of Health 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 who has not done an initial examination of the patients who are to be seen and treated by the dental hygienist, and who 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 Dental Health Program in the Division of Child and Family Health at VDH for the public health dentists providing supervision under this protocol. Guidance for all VDH dental hygienists providing services through remote supervision is outlined below:

    - VDH compliance includes a review of the remote supervision protocol with the dental hygienist. The hygienist will sign an agreement consenting to remote supervision according to the protocol. The hygienist will update the remote agreement annually attaching a copy of their current dental hygiene license, and maintain a copy of the agreement on-site while providing services under this protocol.

    - VDH training by the public health dentist will include didactic and on-site components utilizing evidence based protocols, procedures and standards from the American Dental Association, the American Dental Hygienists' Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, as well as VDH Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Hazard Communication and Blood Borne Pathogen Control Plans.

Management (cont'd):

- VDH monitoring by the public health dentist during remote supervision activities shall include tracking the locations of planned service delivery and review of daily reports of the services provided. Phone or personal communication between the public health dentist and the dental hygienist working under remote supervision will occur at a minimum of every 14 days.

- VDH on-site review to include a sampling of the patients seen by the dental hygienist under remote supervision will be completed annually by the supervising public health dentist. During the on-site review, areas of program and clinical oversight will include appropriate patient documentation for preventive services (consent completed, assessment of conditions, forms completed accurately), clinical quality of preventive services (technique and sealant retention), patient management and referral, compliance with evidence-based program guidance, adherence to general emergency guidelines, and OSHA and Infection Control compliance.

- 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 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 State Health 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.

- The patient or responsible adult should be advised that services provided under the remote supervision protocol do not replace a complete dental examination and that they should take their child to a dentist for regular dental appointments.

Remote Supervision Practice Requirements:

- The dental hygienist shall have graduated from an accredited dental hygiene school, be licensed in Virginia, and 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 annually consent in writing to providing services under remote supervision.

Remote Supervision Practice Requirements (cont'd):

- 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:*

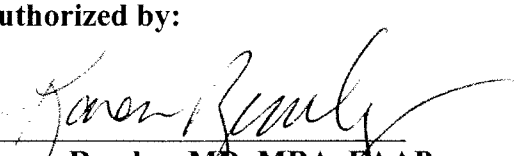
- Performing an initial examination or assessment of teeth and surrounding tissues, including charting existing conditions including carious lesions, periodontal pockets or other abnormal conditions for further evaluation by a dentist, as required.
- Prophylaxis of natural and restored teeth.
- Scaling of natural and restored teeth using hand instruments, and ultrasonic devices.
- Assessing patients to determine the appropriateness of sealant placement according to VDH Dental Program 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 require 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

9/23/10
Date

Approved July, 2009; Revised September, 2010