

Dental Hygienists and Certified Public Health Dental Hygiene Practitioners Act 51

SB 455, PN 1243

Sponsor: Sen. Vance

Date Enacted: July 20, 2007

Summary:

Act 51 amends The Dental Law of May 1, 1933 (P.L.216, No.76) to redefine the role of dental hygienists and certified public health dental hygiene practitioners to allow them to efficiently practice in a wider range of settings.

Prior Law:

There was no prior law defining scope of practice and providing for certification of public health dental hygiene practitioners. In addition, no auxiliary personnel were allowed to perform radiological procedures without the direct supervision of a dentist.

Analysis:

Act 51 amends The Dental Law to define the role and scope of practice for licensed dental hygienists and certified public health dental hygiene practitioners. Dental hygienists may perform radiological procedures in a number of settings under the general supervision of a dentist according to an established plan of assessment and procedure.

Public health dental hygiene practitioner is a new classification of dental hygienist who provide educational, preventive, and therapeutic services. Primarily they may perform intra-oral procedures without the assignment or direct supervision of a dentist, and may perform radiological procedures in approved settings without the general supervision of a dentist. To be certified as a public health dental hygiene practitioner, an individual must: (1) Meet the requirements for a dental hygienist license and successfully pass the dental hygienist exam. (2) Complete 3,600 hours of practice under the supervision of a licensed dentist. (3) Purchase a malpractice policy at the appropriate amount determined by the State Board of Dentistry. To renew a license/certificate 5 hours of the total required continuing education must be public health-related. Public health dental hygiene practitioner may practice at the following sites: schools, correctional facilities, health care facilities, personal care homes, domiciliary care, older adult daily living centers, federally qualified health centers, public or private institutions under the jurisdiction of a federal, state, or local agency, other facilities, and institutions that the Board deems appropriate.

Impact:

Over 1.5 million Pennsylvanians live in a federally designated dental health professional shortage area. By allowing dental hygienists and public health dental hygiene practitioners to perform specific functions without supervision, more people can receive basic dental hygiene services in a variety of settings. As part of the package of scope of practice bills under Governor Rendell's Prescription for Pennsylvania, this will increase access to essential healthcare services.

Effective Date: 60 days from enactment