

NEBRASKA

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DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Pete Ricketts, Governor

Clerk of the Legislature
Nebraska State Capitol
PO Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Reader:

05 August 2021

The evaluation of the 2020 Nebraska Public Health Authorization Dental Services Report is attached. The dental data contained in this report was obtained through a survey of Nebraska's 128 registered dental hygienists with a Public Health Authorization (PHA) and was conducted by the Health Professional Tracking Service at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, College of Public Health. The evaluation of the report results was performed by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Office of Oral Health and Dentistry.

This evaluation is in response to the Nebraska legislative request (LB§38-1130 Section 4 2020 update) for the Department to provide a yearly report to the Board of Dentistry and the State Board of Health and to "annually evaluate the delivery of dental hygiene services in the state and, on or before September 15 of each year beginning in 2021, provide a report electronically to the Clerk of the Legislature regarding such evaluation."

The report evaluation highlights the function of this unique professional workforce (which averaged almost 100,000 dental disease prevention services per year from 2017 to 2019) for people across the lifespan throughout Nebraska, often through local health department programs. These evidence-based services include topical fluoride and dental sealants that can reduce dental decay up to 60% and are significantly less costly than repairing cavities.

The current evaluation notes an increase in the number of PHA hygienists in 2020 but reveals limited services provided, likely due to the negative effects of the pandemic which closed many children's centers, schools and facilities for older adults. There was a 53% drop in the PHA dental services in 2020. It is my professional opinion that the report and evaluation emphasizes the need to re-mobilize this critical PHA workforce and open up new opportunities for expansion to reach even more underserved populations in Nebraska now that the vaccination program has lowered the risk of virus transmission.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles F. Craft" with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr. Charles F. Craft
Nebraska DHHS
State Dental Health Director

2020 Nebraska Public Health Authorization Dental Services Report

One hundred and twenty-eight (128) registered dental hygienists (RDH) were mailed questionnaires regarding usage of the Public Health Authorization (PHA) or Public Health Authorization-Child (PHA-C) during 2020. The 128 included RDHs who either held a PHA or PHA-C permit during 2020. No permits lapsed during 2020.

Of the 128 RDH sent questionnaires, 110 held a PHA and 18 held PHA-C. Ninety-eight (98) responses were received, 87 PHA and 11 PHA-C, reflecting a 76.6% response.

Thirty-Eight (38) RDHs reported providing services in 2020, indicating that 29.7% of RDHs who held a PHA or PHA-C during 2020 utilized the permit. Services were provided in 54 of the 93 counties in Nebraska, this represents 58% of the State.

Services were provided in the following locations (number of RDHs reporting this location type):

- Nursing Facility (7)
- School-Based Preventative Health Program (28)
- Federal, State or Local Public Health Department or Clinic (6)
- Community Health Center (5)
- Assisted Living (5)
- Other – Head Start (8)
- WIC (4)
- Daycare and/or Preschool (3)

No services were reported in the following allowable settings: Tribal Clinic, Correctional Facility and Hospital.

Provided services are broken down by age range as seen in the tables below.

2020 Preliminary Charting and Screening Breakdown by Age				
Total: 14613				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	2650	11339	380	244

2020 Oral Health Education to Recipient Breakdown by Age				
Total: 13981				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	2733	10639	378	231

2020 Oral Health Education to Caregiver Breakdown by Age				
Total: 304				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	72	91	71	70

Oral Health Education provided in Group Settings: 213 presentations total.

The total number of workshops provided in 2020 was 203. Age information was not included.

The total number of in-service trainings provided in 2020 was 10. Age information was not included.

2020 Oral Prophylaxis Breakdown by Age				
Total: 1263				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	98	472	454	239

2020 Pulp Vitality Testing Breakdown by Age				
Total: 17				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	0	0	15	2

2020 Topical Fluorides Breakdown by Age				
Total: 6288				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	1513	4188	333	254

2020 Other Topical Agents Breakdown by Age				
Total: 1069				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	867	139	15	48

2020 Sealants Breakdown by Age				
Total: 8217				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	2348	5833	36	0

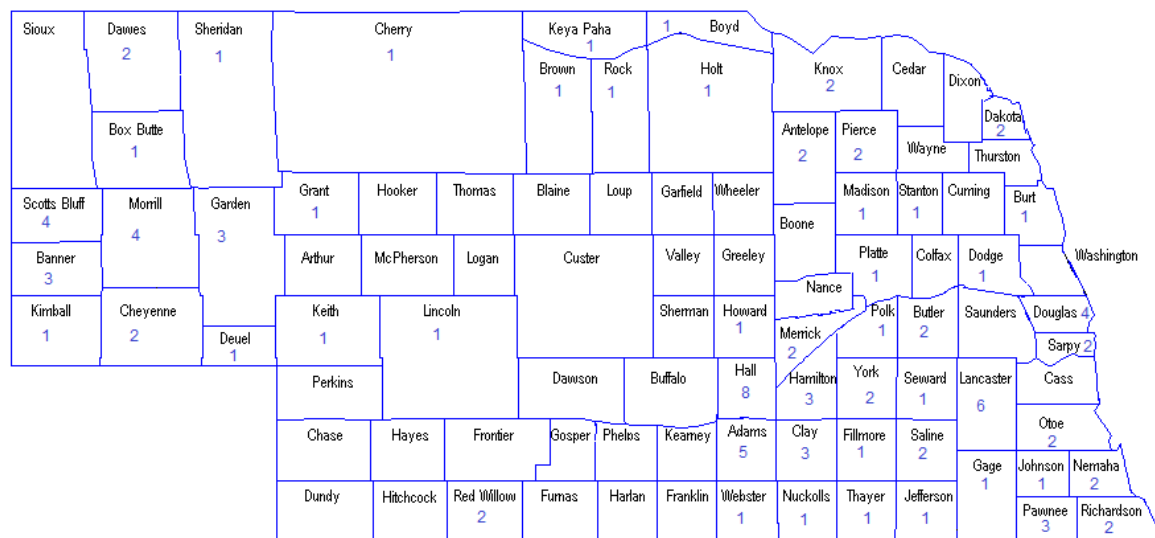
2020 Interim Therapeutic Restoration				
Total: 178				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	107	42	23	6

2020 Prescriptions for Mouth Rinses and Fluorite Products				
Total: 162				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	0	4	103	4

2020 Minor Denture Adjustments				
Total: 0				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	0	0	0	0

2020 Advised Patient - Breakdown by Age				
Total: 13208				
Age Range	0 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 64	65+
Total Service Provided	2424	10212	313	259

Public Health Authorization Adult - Child



End of Year 2020

Counties supported - 38 Dental Hygienists holding a Public Health Authorization or a Public Health Authorization - Child identified using the permits in 54 Nebraska counties. This represents 58% of Nebraska counties served by Public Health Hygienists.

**2020 Nebraska Public Health Dental Hygiene Services
Evaluation Analysis
Dr. Charles F. Craft Dental Director
DHHS Office of Oral Health and Dentistry**

Background: Nebraska registered dental hygienists have been able to obtain a public health authorization since 2007. The public health registered dental hygienist authorization (PHA) permits dental hygienists to provide certain preventive and educational dental services for children and adults in community settings. The type and number of these services are annually collected through a survey conducted by the Health Professional Tracking Service (HPTS) at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, College of Public Health. Dental service and demographic information is entered into a yearly Nebraska Public Health Authorization Dental Services Report which is reviewed and evaluated by the DHHS Office of Oral Health and Dentistry (OOHD). The following is an evaluation of the public health dental hygiene services reported in Nebraska for the year 2020.

PHA dental services are performed around the state and provided across the lifespan in child care centers, schools and older adult locations. Preventive care, such as dental cleanings, topical fluoride applications and protective sealants are some of the most highly effective, evidenced based approaches to reducing dental decay rates. A 2015-16 survey, conducted by the OOHD, found that 64% of Nebraska children have already experienced dental disease. Many PHAs utilize their authorization by working with their local public health departments to provide these approved services.

The OOHD coordinates a statewide program in 12 health departments called “Nebraska Teeth Forever” that successfully mobilizes many of these Public Health Registered Dental Hygienists (PHRDH) in rural areas and has greatly increased the total number of services provided each year. Starting in the second quarter of 2020, the majority of these facilities were effectively closed to outside visitors due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The national emergency COVID-19 health crisis severely limited essential PHA care and resulted in a 53% reduction in the total number of reported Nebraska dental public health services in 2020.

Current Status: PHA services in 2020 were compared to the three year average from the years 2017 to 2019 and the significant report trends are described below:

Positive Trends:

- The number of PHAs increased in 2020 from average of 117 to 128
- The number of PHAs with Adult Authorization increased from average of 101 to 110
- The number of PHAs with Child Authorization increased from average of 16 to 18
- Prescriptions, Interim Therapeutic Restorations and Denture Adjustments increased slightly

Steady Trends:

- PHA survey response in 2020 was 77%, similar to average of 79%
- Under-reporting of PHA field services remains a challenge

Negative Trends:

- The number of PHAs providing services in 2020 decreased from average of 46 to 38

- The percent of PHAs providing services decreased from average of 40% to 30%
- The percent of NE counties served decreased from average of 69% to 58%
- Service locations for young children decreased from average of 32 sites to 15
- Service locations for school students decreased from average of 37 sites to 28
- Service locations for older adults decreased from average of 22 sites to 12
- Total annual PHRDH services decreased from average of 97,709 to 46,075
- Total annual dental screenings decreased from average of 27,460 to 14,613
- Total annual oral hygiene education decreased from average of 24,116 to 13,981
- Total annual caregiver training decreased from average of 4,780 to 304
- Total annual dental cleanings decreased from average of 2,600 to 1,263
- Total annual topical fluorides decreased from average of 20,699 to 6,288
- Total annual other topical agents (SDF) decreased from average of 1,293 to 1,069
- Total annual dental sealants decreased from average of 16,598 to 8,217

A State of Emergency was declared in Nebraska on March 13, 2020. The pandemic immediately limited access to public health hygiene dental disease prevention services. Private dental offices also closed their patient care services to urgent treatment only. This left the entire state with a large reduction in public and private preventive dental services which are essential to achieving sound oral health for children and adults and may have a significant impact on long-term health outcomes.

The negative effects of COVID-19 on PHRDH preventive dental services in 2020 in Nebraska are similar to the drastic decline in children's services across the nation. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued an urgent call to action following a second quarter data review that revealed a 22% drop in vaccinations, a 44% drop in child screenings and a reduction of 69% in dental services. (**Source:** CMS Press release September 23, 2020).

A large gap now exists in obtaining regular dental disease preventive services that are often time-sensitive. Thousands of Nebraskans have already missed important routine dental services. Now that more of the population is vaccinated against COVID-19 and the risk of transmission is lowered, Nebraska will benefit from catching up on critically overdue preventive dental care.

Conclusion: The 2020 report (and previous service reports), indicate the long term value and success of the Nebraska Public Health Hygienist Authorization program. Now, more than ever, public health professionals understand the importance of pro-active disease prevention. There is no vaccine to stop dental decay, but it can be greatly reduced through evidence based low-cost interventions. Now is the time to create new opportunities for more PHA dental hygienists to utilize their public health authorization. Expanding these public health dental hygiene services into new areas of the state carries the potential of reaching additional underserved populations and defending them with the basic tools of prevention.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Charles F. Craft
 State Dental Health Director
 July 15 2020