Career Opportunities in Public Health

Educator
Clinician
Researcher
Dental Hygienist
Advocate
Administrator/Manager

March 2015
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Working in a private dental office remains the primary place of employment for dental hygienists; however, there are a number of career opportunities for a dental hygienist ranging from clinical practice in an innovative setting to coordinating a school sealant program to serving in the state legislature. Your dental hygiene education and experience can open many doors for career pathways in public health.

*Career Opportunities in Public Health* is a resource that highlights the potential career opportunities for dental hygienists outside of private clinical practice. The resource explains the various positions within the five professional roles of dental hygienists as educators, researchers, administrator/managers, advocates, and clinicians. In addition to a description of core responsibilities, the resource lays out the education and experience requirements for each position.

The resource is designed to give dental hygienists a snapshot of opportunities that exist in public health and what preparation is required to pursue those opportunities. Information about specific job postings can be found in ADHA’s Career Center at: [http://careers.adha.org/](http://careers.adha.org/).
EducatOuR RoLe
Position: Faculty – Clinical Instructor

General Description
• Teaches clinical courses at a dental hygiene education program
• Serves on committees and attends faculty meetings
• Keeps abreast of new development trends, techniques and research
• Various positions include adjunct faculty, teaching faculty, assistant professor and professor

Education and Licensure
Requires graduation from a CODA accredited educational program and possess a minimum of an Associate’s degree, some educational institutions may require a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree. Requires state licensure as a dentist or dental hygienist.

Training and Experience
• May require a minimum number of years of clinical experience
• Knowledge of subject matter and course content
• Effective human relations and communications skills
EDUCATOR ROLE
POSITION: FACULTY – DIDACTIC INSTRUCTOR

GENERAL DESCRIPTION
• Teaches didactic courses at a dental hygiene education program
• Serves on committees and attends faculty meetings
• Keeps abreast of new development trends, techniques and research
• Prepares instructional materials
• Various positions include adjunct faculty, teaching faculty, assistant professors and professors

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE
Requires graduation from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program and possess a minimum of Bachelor’s. Requires state licensure as a dentist or dental hygienist.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE
• May require a minimum number of years of clinical experience
• Knowledge of subject matter and course content
• Knowledge of curriculum development, program development and evaluation
• Effective human relations and communications skills
MEET A FACULTY DIDACTIC INSTRUCTOR: 
KATHY VOIGT GEURINK, RDH, MA

“Both the dental and non-dental health care workforce are crucial components of access to care for vulnerable and underserved populations.”

- Has been a Dental Hygienist for 43 years and has held various positions within the dental hygiene profession over the years.
- Discovered that working with underserved children and adults was a very enjoyable and rewarding experience.
- Was an opportunity to interact with people – children and elderly – to provide services to improve their oral health and general health.
- Has served as a Head Start consultant.
- Has worked in a public health role before teaching in a dental hygiene program and it can be a very rewarding and fulfilling career.
EDUCATOR ROLE
POSITION: FACULTY – PROGRAM DIRECTOR/CHAIR

GENERAL DESCRIPTION
• Manages the department, including budget and faculty
• Serves on various on-and off-campus committees
• Participates in grant process, presentations and publications

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE
Requires graduation from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program and possess a minimum of a Master’s degree or higher degree or currently enrolled in a Master’s or higher degree program. Must be eligible for state licensure as a dental hygienist or dental hygiene faculty.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE
• Experience in teaching, curriculum development, student recruitment and retention
• Experience with faculty recruitment, development and retention
• Experience managing budgets and generating external funding
• Excellent oral, written and interpersonal communication skills
MEET A PROGRAM DIRECTOR:
DR. COLLEEN BRICKLE RDH, RF, EdD

“Knowing that my work to provide access to public health for the greater good results in receiving more than I have given.”

- For nearly 22 years, Brickle's primary role has been as a dental hygiene educator at Normandale Community College.
- Has led the effort to develop and implement career ladder programs for dental hygienists. In 2008, she was named to her present position, Dean of Health Sciences.
- Was instrumental in planning and implementing a community clinic housed in Normandale's dental hygiene clinic, and serves public program and uninsured patients on a sliding scale basis.
- Helped to develop a dual enrollment dental hygiene program with Metropolitan State University that allows students to stay on Normandale's campus to earn a bachelor's degree.
- She has also helped secure several grants for the Dental Hygiene program, including a recent grant to expand Oral Healthcare Access at Normandale's dental hygiene clinic.
EDUCATOR ROLE

POSITION: HEALTH EDUCATOR/PUBLIC HEALTH DENTAL HYGIENIST

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

• Encourages healthy lifestyles and wellness through education via health promotion and disease prevention
• Performs preventive dental hygiene services on patients

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE

Requires graduation from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program and possess a Bachelor’s degree or Associate’s degree with additional training and experience. Minimum education varies by state or program. Master's degree may be preferred for some programs. Requires state licensure as a dental hygienist.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

• Certification in health education or as a Certified Health Education Specialist is helpful
• Experience in treating patients with special health care needs
• Excellent written and oral communication skills
• Ability to work with a diverse patient population and their parents, guardians, and care givers
MEET A HEALTH EDUCATOR/PUBLIC HEALTH DENTAL HYGIENIST:
CHERYL H. TERPAK, RDH, BSDH, MS

“Oral health means more than healthy teeth, it means being free from oral pain and disease. It allows us to speak, eat, and smile with confidence. And it improves our overall health and well-being.”

- Driven by the challenges of a position influencing oral health policy at the state level.
- Provide technical assistance to local-level programs to help public health nurses and dental coordinators to include oral health activities into their programs and community outreach efforts.
- Interested in working with individuals who are dedicated to improving the health and well-being of their clients.
- Distributes educational tools and conduct presentations at all levels to interested parties.
- Collaborates to develop guidelines intended to assist health care professionals in private, public, and community-based practices in delivering oral health services to pregnant women and their children.
RESEARCHER ROLE

POSITION: RESEARCH ADMINISTRATOR

GENERAL DESCRIPTION
• Develops and administers projects
• Manages project including financials, personnel and legal requirements
• Interfaces with program sponsors

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE
Requires a minimum of a Master’s degree in Research Administration or Bachelor’s degree with several years of relevant experience.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE
• Certification by Research Administrators Certification Council (CRA)
• Strong writing, computing and interpersonal communication skills
MEET A RESEARCH ADMINISTRATOR:
CHRISTINE CHARLES, RDH, BS

“Educating consumers and delivering innovative new oral care products can have a meaningful impact in improving oral health.”

- Has spent many years in oral care clinical research in the private sector, including working for Lever Brothers, Warner Lambert, Pfizer Inc., and Johnson & Johnson.
- Helping others become healthier was an important factor in moving from a clinical practice to a career in consumer product research, with a focus on oral health product safety and efficacy.
- Never said NO to opportunities which would help improve health, research, products, or education to support personal goals.
- Strongly believes that good oral hygiene is essential to good oral health and everyone should have access to oral care services.
- There is a link between oral health and confidence.
- Take responsibility for your journey as you grow and develop your career. You create your opportunities.
**RESEARCHER ROLE**

**POSITION:** EPIDEMIOLOGIST

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

- Investigates and describes factors that influence the development of disease, disability and other health outcomes
- Work settings may include: community/public health settings, non-profit organizations, universities and government agencies

**EDUCATION AND LICENSURE**

Requires a minimum of Master’s degree in public health or related field. Doctorate degree may be required.

**TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE**

- Certification through the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology is helpful
RESEARCHER ROLE

POSITION: CLINICAL TRIAL SPECIALIST

GENERAL DESCRIPTION
- Administers trials in the field of biomedical or health related studies, usually involving human subjects
- Work settings may include a pharmaceutical company or academic institution

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE
Requires a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree in a science related field. Master’s degree preferred.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE
- Knowledge of computer programming is helpful
- Working knowledge of medical terminology and procedures
MEET A CLINICAL TRIAL SPECIALIST:
RUTH NOWJACK-RAYMER, RDH, BS, MPH, PhD.

“A profession that focused on prevention – what a wonderful career that would be!”

- Has worked with the National Institutes of Health for 26 years.
- Contribute to the State Health Plan and to testimony when drafting legislation.
- Dental Hygiene can serve as a portal into public health careers including valuable clinical care in publically funded settings.
- Advanced degrees and continuing education courses are required to evolve beyond clinical care.
- Resolve to overcome barriers and don’t give up – change can take decades...but it’s worth it!
RESEARCHER ROLE

POSITION: RESEARCH SCIENTIST

GENERAL DESCRIPTION
• Designs, conducts and analyzes data collected in experiments
• Develops new products, processes and applications

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE
Requires a minimum of a Master’s degree in science, mathematics, physics, computer science or related field. Doctorate degree preferred.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE
• Knowledge of the principles of survey design, analysis, modeling, sampling and standard statistical software packages
• Experience estimating project and proposal costs is a plus
**ADMINISTRATOR/MANAGER ROLE**

**POSITION:** STATE DENTAL ORAL HEALTH PROGRAM DIRECTOR

<table>
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<tr>
<th>GENERAL DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Provides leadership for state-wide public health oral health activities; supervises licensed dental professionals and service delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develops, implements and evaluate program goals, objectives, guidelines, policies, work procedures and budgets</td>
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<td>• Conducts strategic planning and determines priorities in order to integrate prevention, grants, and fiscal processes between programs</td>
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<th>TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Experience in state Medicaid program, dental policy development, provider relations, public health practices and operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experience in administration and budget development</td>
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**ADMINISTRATOR/MANAGER ROLE**

**POSITION:** Local/County Oral Health Program Director

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

- Plans and directs local and county dental program activities and operations
- Supervises and oversees delivery of clinical services and dental providers

**EDUCATION AND LICENSURE**

Minimum education varies by state. May require Doctorate degree in dentistry or Bachelor’s degree in dental hygiene. Master’s degree in public health, public administration, education or related field preferred. Requires state licensure as a dentist or dental hygienist.

**TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE**

- Experience in local, city and county public assistance dental programs
- Experience in program development and implementation
- Experience in grant writing
MEET A LOCAL/COUNTY ORAL HEALTH PROGRAM DIRECTOR: 
THERESA (TRACY) ANSELMO, RDH, BSDH, MPH

“I have been very privileged and want to give back some of what I have been lucky enough to receive. I can do that through dental hygiene.”

- Works as a Program Manager for the County of San Luis Obispo, CA.
- Moved to the public sector after job dissatisfaction in private practice took its toll. The difference between helping people become healthy verses just working a job.
- Focused on helping others have a more positive dental experience.
- Applies current dental hygiene knowledge to programs at the local level for program implementation by seeing out community service opportunities and projects.
- Believes that oral health is important to everyone. It is the foundation for better overall health.
- Becoming familiar with public health agencies in the local area, the state, and the nation. Laws that govern dental hygiene practice create opportunities to serve.
ADMINISTRATOR/MANAGER ROLE

POSITION: PROGRAM MANAGER/SPECIALIST

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

• Directs, supervises, and performs work related to the development, implementation, operation, administration, evaluation and funding of public health programs

• Ensures organizational goals are met and programs activities comply with applicable regulations

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE

Requires a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree at the local-level and a Master’s degree at the state-level. May require coursework in a specific field.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

• Knowledge in the principles, methods and techniques of administering public health programs

• Cultural competency and oral health literacy

• Grant writing and experience working with state and local government, public, nonprofit and private entities in program administration
MEET A PROGRAM MANAGER SPECIALIST: M. CATHERINE HOLLISTER, RDH, MSPH, PhD.

“If your original education was primarily clinical, you may need to further your education to work in a non-clinical role.”

- Has worked in public health clinics and realized she enjoyed treating the entire community rather than only the patients.
- Works with Native American tribes in the region to increase access to care, adopt policies that support oral health, and assures that tribal members receive the services they need.
- Conducts program review to monitor quality, productivity, and efficiency.
- Enjoys working in dentistry and has always sought out various avenues to grow professionally.
- Work in the public health arena has the potential to impact the oral health of entire communities and reaches those individuals who either cannot or choose not to access clinical care.
- Investigate your professional opportunities and consider your strengths and areas of interest.
## ADMINISTRATOR/MANAGER ROLE

### POSITION: MEDICAID/MEDICARE PROGRAM SPECIALIST

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION
- Develops and implements policies for dental programs
- Chairs and conducts meetings with providers on proposed policies
- Researches and writes proposed new policies
- Responds to inquiries from the legislature, providers and beneficiaries

### EDUCATION AND LICENSURE
Requires a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree in health policy, health studies, social work, economics or a related field. May require licensure as a health care professional such as a dental hygienist, nurse, lab technologist, etc.

### TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE
- Knowledge and experience in health policy, provider relations, public health practices and operations as well as coding and billing practices
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Knowledge of computer hardware and software
ADMINISTRATOR/Manager Role

Position: Program/Grant Administrator

General Description

• Oversees the development, implementation, administration, and management of programs/projects from the planning phase to completion

• Manages the procurement process as it relates to the expenditures of grant funds

• Ensures full compliance with grant requirements, federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations

Education and Licensure

Requires a minimum of an Associate’s degree and 3 years of related experience (typically), Bachelor’s degree preferred. May require a licensure as a health care professional.

Training and Experience

• Knowledge and experience in the grant application process

• Excellent leadership, research, organization, and written and verbal communication skills

• Experience in preparing budget reports, cost analyses, and monitoring performance of consultants/subcontractors
MEET A PROGRAM/GRANT ADMINISTRATOR:
MATT CRESPIN, MPH, RDH

“No one day is the same as the previous and that is what I love about my job.”

- Daily activities included educating legislators and policy makers, evaluating programs, visiting school-based oral health programs and providing technical assistance to improve efficiency.
- The Alliance manages one of the country’s largest and most successful state-based oral health prevention program based in schools. Their model of care has been replicated by other states across the country.
- Was interested in becoming a dentist and thought having a background in dental hygiene would be a great benefit. After leaving school Matt decided not to pursue dental school and instead use his education in dental hygiene to improve oral health.
- Has a strong interest in policy. Interested in making changes on a population health level.
- Seek out a mentor and offer to shadow others in roles you are interested in. Often times the best way to get involved is to dive right in and learn in a hands-on way.
ADVOCATE ROLE
POSITION: CASE MANAGER, ORAL HEALTH COORDINATOR AND COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER

GENERAL DESCRIPTION
• Provides case management, patient advocacy and crisis intervention to patients accessing oral health services
• Seeks resources and helps clients navigate complex systems of health and human services to ensure continuum of care needs of patients are identified and appropriate services accessed, coordinated, and monitored

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE
Bachelor’s degree in health/social services or equivalent strongly preferred.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE
• Experience working with special needs populations and facilitating connections between individuals and services (i.e. oral health)
• Strong computer competency, including knowledge of electronic medical records, computerized appointment/billing programs, and Microsoft Office programs
• Ability to speak a foreign language is helpful
# Advocate Role

**Position:** Lobbyist/Legislative Representative for an Association, Not for Profit or Non-Governmental Organization

## General Description

- Develops and oversees organization’s advocacy and public policy strategy
- Tracks legislation, rules and policy impacting oral health care
- Develops and maintains strong relationships with lawmakers, coalition partners and other stakeholder groups

## Education and Licensure

Bachelor’s degree required. Master’s or Law degree preferred.

## Training and Experience

- May require a minimum of 5 years experience in governmental relations, working for a not for profit, corporation, association or non-governmental organization
- Understanding of the legislative and regulatory process
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills, presentation and organizational skills
- Experience in the federal, state legislative or executive branch helpful
- Extensive knowledge in issue area (i.e. health care delivery)
ADVOCATE
POSITION: LEGISLATOR/LAW MAKER

GENERAL DESCRIPTION
• Represents constituents in the United States Congress or state legislature
• Drafts and advocates for government policies

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE
No specific educational requirement; however the vast majority of Members of the United States Congress have an academic degree; nearly ½ of Congressional Members possess a Law degree or Master’s degree.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE
• Legislators come from all different professional backgrounds (e.g. law, healthcare, business, education, congressional staff, etc)
• Experience serving in the government on the federal, state or local level helpful
CLINICIAN ROLE

POSITION: NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE CORPS (NHSC)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

• Provides clinical dental hygiene services to patients, primarily low income and under-served populations, in community clinics, clinics at Federal Prisons, most Indian Reservations and Immigrant Detention Facilities

• NHSC is a federal loan repayment program that promotes practice in underserved areas and NHSC is the health care version on the Peace Corps

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE

Requires graduation from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program and possess a minimum of an Associate to Bachelor’s degree. Participants with an Associate’s degree are required to have one year of practice experience. Requires state licensure as a dental hygienist. License must be valid and unrestricted.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

• Community/Public Health Education helpful

National Health Service Corps (NHSC) clinics:
http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/
**CLINICIAN ROLE**

**POSITION:**  UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

- Provides primarily clinical dental hygiene services in clinics located on Indian Reservations, in Federal Prisons and in Immigrant Detention Facilities
- The Public Health Service is a Commissioned Corps – one of the seven uniformed services for the federal government

**EDUCATION AND LICENSURE**

Requires graduation from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program and possess a minimum of an Associate to Bachelor’s degree (depending on the clinic). Requires an unrestricted dental license from any state.

**TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE**

- Community/Public Health Education helpful

Meet a United States Public Health Service Representative: Melissa Reese, BSDH

“Your mouth is the entry way to your body. If it is diseased, you are diseased. End of story.”

- Became a dental assistant in 1997 and then fell in love with the field of dentistry.
- The most rewarding experience of her life was when she became a Commissioned Officer in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) after a short stint in private practice.
- Has the best of both worlds: dental hygiene on a part-time basis combined with planning, developing, and implementing community-level oral health projects.
- Work as a USPHS allows for the development and coordination of broad-scale oral health outreach services, serving more than 318,000 Native American and Alaskan Native peoples.
- A career in public health allows for the focus on quality of care and impact rather than on dollar figures and production quotas.
CLINICIAN ROLE
POSITION: MILITARY AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

GENERAL DESCRIPTION
• Provides primarily clinical dental hygiene services within a Federal agency premises’, both at domestic and overseas locations

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE
Must have current licensure to practice as a dental hygienist in a state or territory of the United States or the District of Columbia. Additionally, they must be certified as radiographers in their field.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE
• One year of experience in the same or similar work with the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the position being filled
• Candidates must clearly demonstrate they possess specialized experience performing advanced prophylactic and preventive procedures in the treatment of patients with related medical and dental problems; reviewing patient medical/dental history; inspecting the mouth/throat for evidence of disease and teeth and surrounding tissues for evidences of plaque and periodontal disease and interpreting routine x-rays for tooth and gum abnormalities
CLINICIAN ROLE

POSITION: PUBLIC HEALTH DENTAL HYGIENIST IN A STATE PROGRAM

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

- Plans and directs prevention based oral health programming for local counties
- Provide oral health assessments in schools, coordinate school based sealant and/or fluoride programs
- Consults with community agencies on oral health initiatives

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE

Requires graduation from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program and possess a minimum of an Associate’s degree. Requires state licensure as a dental hygienist and other requirements by state statute.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

- Clinical experience and experience in community public health programs
MEET A PUBLIC HEALTH DENTAL HYGIENIST IN A STATE PROGRAM:
ANNE VARCASIO, RDH, MA

“Welcome the frustration in your work as a sign of growth and look for opportunities to continue learning.”

- Currently serves as a Public Health Specialist for the New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Dental Health.
- Prevention of dental disease in children is the nucleus of her career.
- A blend of personal and professional choices led to the dental hygiene profession. Working alongside dental hygienists set the stage and allowed for pursuing a degree in dental hygiene.
- Working in a hospital setting broadened opportunities to work with people with disabilities and young children. This same setting provided a link with residential health care and Head Start programs and a desire to learn more about public health and social policy.
- Outreach and developing educational programs and resources provided a link to evidence-based prevention strategies.
**CLINICIAN ROLE**
**POSITION: RDH in a Non-Traditional Setting**

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION**
- Provides primarily clinical dental hygiene services to underserved populations in nontraditional settings
- 37 states allow dental hygienists to practice in settings outside of the dental office without the presence of a dentist

**EDUCATION AND LICENSURE**
Requires graduation from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program and possess a minimum of an Associate or Bachelor’s degree. Requires state licensure as a dental hygienist. May require additional certification.

**TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE**
- Experience (years or hours) as a clinician may be required (varies by state)
- Course work in community/public health may be required
- Experience collaborating with health care providers to offer an integrated approach to patient care
MEET A RDH IN A NON-TRADITIONAL SETTING:
HEIDI HALVERSON RDH, BSDH, LAP

“It only takes one day working in these facilities and you become an advocate for them.”

- Working as a public health dental hygienist in Alaska and as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Jamaica contributed to her passion for providing dental hygiene services to individuals that could not travel to a dental office.
- Goes to where her clients live to provide preventive dental hygiene services. Also collaborates with long-term care facility administrators, social workers, nurses, home health agencies, Medicaid waiver programs and Ombudsman. Acts as the receptionist, assistant, bookkeeper and clinician all in one.
- Would encourage all dental hygienists’ to develop alliances with other groups and organizations that can help lead the transformation of the dental hygiene profession.
- Dental hygienists’ have an important role to play in addressing the issues associated with access to dental care.
- Make sure to be a member of ADHA because support is needed to move forward on making our communities healthier.
MEET A NATIVE AMERICAN HEALTH CENTER CLINICAL RDH: 
MICHAEL LAFLAMME, RDH, B.A.

“A healthy mouth equals a healthy body. So many miss that connection.”

- Worked in the air force as a dental assistant and hygienist while also receiving training as a field medic. His love for Public Health began at this time for the military model was the public health model and he saw individual oral health to be more important than any profit driven model.

- Only RDH on staff at Native American Health Center, and works directly with dental student externs and residents to train and hone their skills in dental hygiene, specifically techniques, equipment, and preventative strategies and interventions.

- Clinic works in several events and projects to improve oral health and access for children. He also volunteers for one-day public health outreach clinics for local community.

- Was directly involved in creating dental services for a local medical clinic that treats eligible working poor patients for free. Worked directly with their director and helped educate their dental coordinator.
**Clinician Role**

**Position:** FQHC/Local Health Department

**General Description**
- Provides clinical dental hygiene services to patients in Federally Qualified Health Centers, or Local Health Departments

**Education and Licensure**
- Requires graduation from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program and possess a minimum of an Associate or Bachelor’s degree. Requires state licensure as a dental hygienist and other requirements by state statute.

**Training and Experience**
- Experience and education in community/public health helpful
MEET A PUBLIC HEALTH FQHC/LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT:
BETTY KABEL, RDH, BS

“My team of dental hygienists and I feel we are improving the oral health of children and making a difference in their lives.”

- Works with the FDHA to advocate for change in the delivery of dental hygiene services.
- Has experience working at the University level, in dental outreach, and at the State-level in Northern Florida.
- Her current position is different than the traditional clinical-setting because she deals directly with government hurdles and barriers.
- The key component to improving oral healthcare is EDUCATION!
- Wants hygienists to be inspired and empowered, because they have a gift to help improve an individual’s overall health.
- Betty recommends that any interested RDH should become involved in professional organizations. Joining the ADHA and your local component provides opportunities outside of traditional clinical practice.
CLINICIAN ROLE
POSITION: INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR/COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE HYGIENIST

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

• Provides clinical dental hygiene services to patients (primarily in nontraditional settings such as nursing homes and schools) according to state provisions
• ADD Health Professional Shortage Areas (in non-traditional settings, such as nursing homes, schools, etc.)
• Works in collaboration with a dentist (state law may require a written agreement with a dentist)

EDUCATION AND LICENSURE

Requires graduation from a CODA accredited dental hygiene program and possess a minimum of an Associate or Bachelor’s degree (depending on the clinic). Requires state licensure as a dental hygienist. May require additional certification.

TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

• Experience (years or hours) as a clinician may be required (varies by state)
• Course work in business and community/public health helpful
MEET AN INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR/COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE HYGIENIST:

Lisa Handa, RDA, RDH, RDHAP, MS

“I would like readers to realize that dental hygiene is more than just clinical care. Our education has prepared us for so much more, and with the right attitude and passion they can improve the lives of many people and our oral health care system.”

- Longterm goal was to gather a small group of hygienists together who would be willing to travel to rural communities or clinics. Eventually, open her own practice which would be limited to children, the mentally and physically disabled and the elderly. At the time she had no idea it would ever come true...it was just an idea that felt good!

- Has been able to utilized her skill-set in each of the six professional roles (clinician, educator, researcher, advocate, and administrator/manager) of the dental hygienist. As a result, she does not feel limited professionally.

- Working as an RDHAP in non-traditional settings requires the ability to be patient, flexible, intuitive, creative, and fearless.

- Get involved in your community and your local dental hygiene association. Find out what skill set you will need to achieve your dream and go for it!