Dental Health Professions

Montana Office of Rural Health
Area Health Education Center
A Global Perspective
How’s this for a toothbrush...?
Toothpaste!
Why Oral Health Careers?

- High job demand
- A shocking shortage
  - Most of Montana is designated as a “Health Professions Shortage Area” which means that in most of Montana, citizens do not have access to adequate levels of primary care, dental care, and mental health services.
Montana Critical-Access Hospital Dental Care Needs

Surveyed Data from 2013/2014 Implementation Plans
Drafted by the Montana Office of Rural Health

Legend:
- Critical-Access Hospitals (not surveyed)
- Surveyed Critical Access Hospitals
- Hospital Prioritizing Dental Care Needs
- Large Hospitals
- Dental Care Shortage Areas
Four Main Oral Health Careers

- Dental Laboratory Technician
- Dental Assistant
- Dental Hygienist
- Dentist
• Dental Laboratory Technicians work with a variety of materials, as well as sophisticated instruments and equipment, to create dental prosthetics.
• Average national salary: $34,000
• Education: College level is encouraged, but careers can begin through on the job training. Some DTLs receive training through two year accredited programs.

Dental Laboratory Technician
Dental Assistants may perform many tasks including taking and developing dental radiographs (x-rays), sterilizing instruments and equipment and taking impressions of patients’ teeth.

- Average national salary: $32,000
- Education: College level is encouraged, but careers can begin through on the job training. Many dental assistants complete an ADA accredited dental assisting education program, which is typically a year long.
Dental Hygienists use their knowledge and clinical skills to provide dental hygiene care for patients.

- Average national salary: $66,500
- Projected to be one of the 30 fastest growing occupations!
- Education: Associates degree – 2 year program

Dental Hygienist
Dentists diagnose, prevent, and treat problems with teeth or mouth tissue. They remove decay, fill cavities, examine x-rays, place protective sealants on children’s teeth and repair fractured teeth.

- Average national salary: $132,000
- Education: Usually an undergrad degree (4 years) + Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) or Doctor of Medicine in Dentistry degree (DMD) (4 years)
Forensic odontologists are highly experienced, specially trained dentists who use their expertise to help identify unknown remains and trace bite marks to a specific individual.

- Average national salary: $150,000 - $185,000
- Education: A undergrad degree (4 years) + Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) (4 years) + 25 work cases to become board certified
Dental Ladder

• **Dental Assistant** Certificate or Associate Degree
  • (Salish Kootenai College & Great Falls COT)

• **Dental Hygienist**
  • Associate Degree
  • (Great Falls COT)

• **Dentist**
  • Bachelor’s Degree +
  • 8 years total of college (no MT school, but we do have partnerships with schools – WICHE - that hold slots for MT students)
Montana Education Options

- Montana State University, Great Falls
- Salish Kootenai College, Pablo
- Chairside Dental Assistant Program, Missoula
- Brewer Dental Center, Billings
- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)
Financial Support

- Scholarships
- Loan Repayment
- Workforce Development
Strategies to help YOU get ahead

• Job shadow/ Identify a mentor
• Remember the “Ladders” technique
• Obtain short term health care certifications
  • First Aid/CPR
• Medical Terminology
• Challenge yourself! If you have advance courses, take them
• Join or start a HOSA chapter at your school!
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