DHATs (Dental Health Aide Therapists) are mid-level professionals that are part of a dentist-led team. They perform high-quality, routine and preventive dental care, expanding access to those who need it most. Recruited from, and returning to their own communities, DHATs increase the number of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) providers that are best able to ensure culturally relevant care.

While helping improve oral health access and outcomes in AI/AN communities, DHATs can also be a cost-effective solution for Tribal Health Programs.

DHATs cost only about $.30 for every dollar they generate. This allows dental teams to see more Medicaid and under-insured patients at existing reimbursement rates, and put those cost savings into further expanding care.

DHATs, earning about half the salary of a dentist, can perform many routine procedures typically done by a dentist:
- Swinomish Indian Tribal Community analyzed the procedures done at their dental clinic and found that a DHAT could perform 50% of the procedures being done by the dentist.
- A published study of portion of care that could be performed by mid-level professionals at a series of safety net clinics found that DHATs could perform between 64 and 90% of the procedures, depending on clinic type.

DHATs have a select scope of practice that includes both preventive and restorative procedures and allows providers to work at the top of their scope. This team approach increases efficiency and supports the clinic’s bottom line.

DHATs can decrease costly dental-related emergency room visits by increasing access to preventive dental services and continuity of care.

DHATs that stay in their community generate economic benefits for themselves and their Tribes. The accelerated, post-secondary degree training program offers a very realistic career pathway and results in a living-wage job. Tribes benefit from those jobs coming from and staying in the community.

1 Kim, Frances M. “Economic Viability of Dental Therapists.” Community Catalyst. May 2013

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