



At its February 6, 2015 meeting, the Commission on Dental Accreditation adopted the Accreditation Standards for Dental Therapy Education Programs.

Below are highlights from the approved dental therapy standards:

Program Length: The educational program must include at least three academic years of full-time instruction or its equivalent at the postsecondary level. This is considered the minimum amount of time required to educate a dental therapist. A specific academic degree is not identified.

Advanced Standing: The program may grant credit for prior coursework toward completion of the dental therapy program. This credit may be given to dental assistants, expanded function dental assistants and dental hygienists who are moving into a dental therapy program. Programs prerequisites and other allied dental program course work are a part of the years of full-time study.

Supervision: The dental therapist provides care with supervision at a level specified by the state practice act.

Scope of Practice: Dental therapy's minimal scope of practice is outlined in the standards by listing the competencies required within the dental therapy curriculum. Some of the assessment skills such as evaluation, charting, patient referral and radiographs are listed. Preventative functions include, but are not limited to, sub-gingival scaling and dental prophylaxis, application of preventive agents, dispensing and administration of non-narcotic medications via oral or topical routes as prescribe by a licensed health care provider based on state laws. Restorative/surgical procedures such as simple extractions of primary teeth, fabrication of temporary crowns, pulp capping, preparation and placement of direct restorations.

Relation to State Statutes: All authorized functions of a dental therapist in the state in which they practice must be included in the curriculum at the level, depth and scope required by the state.

Program Director: The dental therapy program director must be a licensed dentist or a licensed dental therapist who possesses a master's or higher degree and must have a full-time administrative appointment as defined by the institution. A dental hygienist, who is also a dental therapist would be qualified to serve as the program director.

The Accreditation Standards and Principles and Criteria Eligibility are found on the Commission's Accreditation News Webpage:

<http://www.ada.org/en/coda/accreditation/accreditation-news>