



Hawai'i Primary Care Association

2009 Legislative Agenda for Hawaii's Community Health Centers

Licensing for Dental Residents

What the bill would do:

This bill asks that the legislature amend dental licensing laws so that any dentist enrolled in an American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation accredited dental residency program can be granted a temporary license for the duration of the residency program. This will support a new community health center-based program that will train post-doctoral dental residents to be pediatric specialists.

Talking points:

The availability of dentists who see children covered by Medicaid is very limited, especially on neighbor islands. A pediatric dental residency program will increase the dental workforce trained to do pediatric dental care.

Because Medicaid services for children are so limited on Neighbor Islands, the Department of Human Services spent more than one million dollars last year just to transport children (and a parent) from Neighbor Islands— where providers who accept Med-QUEST patients are few—to O'ahu to get care.

The pediatric residency will help dentists gain skills they need to care for adults with developmental disabilities. This, too, is a group whose access to dental care is currently seriously limited due to the shortage of available dentists.

Head Start and other programs that promote the health and well-being of children recommend that a child should have his or her first visit to a dentist at age one. Unfortunately, few dentists in Hawaii are open to caring for such young children. Worse, the availability of dentists who will young children covered by Medicaid is extremely limited.

Statistics on children's oral health show a national problem that is greatly magnified in Hawai'i. Hawai'i's children have significantly more unmet dental needs, more baby-bottle tooth decay, and more decayed and filled teeth than the national average.

Community Health Centers have been steadily expanding their dental capacity. In 2007, seven CHCs served 19,879 patients; by 2009 eleven CHCs will offer this service. The pediatric dental residency program will contribute to developing the workforce that will allow CHCs to expand to meet more of the needs of underserved children.