DENTAL THERAPISTS IN MINNESOTA:

Mark Schoenbaum

Minnesota Department of Health

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Emerging Health Professions in MN

Licensed/certified + Reimbursed by Medicaid

- **Community Health Workers (2007)**
- **Peer Support Specialists (2007)**
- **Dental Therapists (2009)**
- **Community Paramedics (2011 -12)**
- **Doulas (2013)**

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Definitions

- **Dental Therapists -** evaluative, preventive, restorative and minor surgical dental care under the direction of a dentist.
- **Advanced Dental Therapists -** After 2,000 hours, dental therapists eligible for certification as ADTs.
  - May provide additional services - oral evaluation and assessment, treatment plan formulation, non–surgical extraction of certain diseased teeth
  - Also practice under the supervision of a dentist, but dentist need not be on site or see patients before they receive care.
- **Education -** Either a Bachelors or Masters degree; Advanced Dental Therapists need a Masters degree.
  - Two education programs
- **Many are also dental hygienists.**

History Recap

- **2008** **Leg. charters Work Group**
  International site visits
- **2009** **Licensing law, education begins**
- **2011** **First graduates, practice begins**
- **2014** **First state evaluation published**
  2012-13 data
- **2016** **Education changes**
  Dual dental hygiene/dental therapy at both schools

Health Policy Division, Office of
Rural Health and Primary Care
PO Box 64882
St. Paul, MN 55164-0882
651-201-3838
www.health.state.mn.us

Minnesota Board of Dentistry
2829 University Avenue SE
Suite 450
Minneapolis, MN 55414-3246
612-617-2250
www.dentalboard.state.mn.us

Early Impacts of Dental Therapists in Minnesota

Minnesota Department of Health
Minnesota Board of Dentistry
Report to the Minnesota Legislature 2014

Methods

- Dental therapist licensing data
- Survey of 1,382 dental therapist patients
- Interviews with clinics employing dental therapists
- Clinic administrative data
- Oral health-related emergency room usage data

Photo: Thedailystar.net

Findings

- DT workforce is growing & appears to be serving low-income, uninsured and underserved patients.
- DTs appear to be practicing safely. Clinics report improved quality and high patient satisfaction.
- Clinics with DTs seeing more new patients, most underserved.
- DTs have made it possible to decrease travel time and wait times for some patients, increasing access.
- Benefits include direct costs savings, team productivity, improved patient satisfaction and lower fail rates.

Findings, continued

- Savings making it more possible to expand capacity.
- Start-up is varied: employers expect continuing evolution.
- Most considering hiring additional DTs after 1 year.
- DTs have potential to reduce unnecessary ER visits.
- With same rates for DDS & DT, not necessarily an immediate savings to the state on each claim paid; however, differential between state rates and clinics' lower costs for DTs appears to be contributing to more patients being seen.

Health Care Workforce Reports

In 1993, the Minnesota Legislature mandated collection of a variety of information from many licensed or registered health care providers. Working with Minnesota's licensing boards, the Office of Rural Health and Primary Care collects practice data for health professionals in conjunction with regular licensing renewals.

Survey response rates vary between 60 percent and 90 percent, depending on the profession surveyed. Data include major professional activities; hours per week in each major professional activity; practice location and setting; specialties; race and ethnicity (added in 2005).

Reports

- Dental Assistants
- Dental Hygienists
- Dental Therapists
- Dentists
- Licensed Practical Nurses
- Pharmacists, Pharmacy Technicians and Pharmacies
- Physical Therapists
- Physical Therapist Assistants
- Physicians
- Physician Assistants
- Registered Nurses
- Respiratory Therapists
- Social Workers
- Workforce Demand
- Other professions and reports with multiple professions

Minnesota's Dental Therapist Workforce, 2015

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2015 DENTAL THERAPIST WORKFORCE SURVEY[1]

Overall

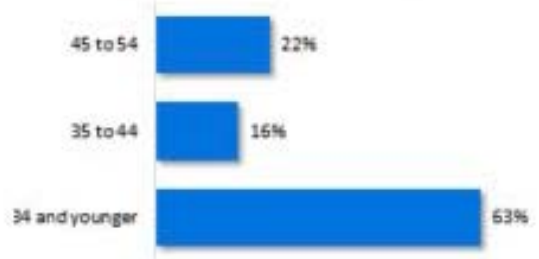
Dental therapists were first authorized to practice in Minnesota in 2009, with the Minnesota Board of Dentistry licensing its first dental therapist in 2011. Dental therapists are a member of the dental team providing preventive and basic restorative services. By law, they are required to practice in settings serving primarily low-income, uninsured and underserved patients, or practice in areas designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). According to the Minnesota Board of Dentistry, as of October 2015 (at the start of the survey process), there were **51** actively licensed dental therapists, of which 13 are advanced dental therapists (ADTs) who have a more advanced scope of practice.[2] As of August 2016 there were 64 dental therapists of which 26 are ADTs.

Demographics

Sex. In general, health care professions tend to be female-dominated, including dental therapy. Ninety percent of Minnesota dental therapists are female.

Age. Dental therapy is a young profession, with 63 percent of dental therapists age 34 and under. The median age of dental therapists is 32.

Age of Minnesota Dental Therapists



Source: Minnesota Board of Dentistry, October 2015. Analysis done by MDH. Percentages are based on 51 Minnesota licensed dental therapists who provided valid birth dates to the Board.

Race. The majority (83.7 percent) of dental therapists indicated they were white, typical of racial patterns among most health care professionals. The second most common race for dental therapists is Asian with 14 percent in one of three Asian categories (Southeast Asian, South Asian, or some other Asian race). Twelve percent are more than one race.

Race of Minnesota Dental Therapists

Dental Therapist Survey

- **November to December 2015**
- **Based on 51 actively licensed dental therapists**
- **83 percent response rate**

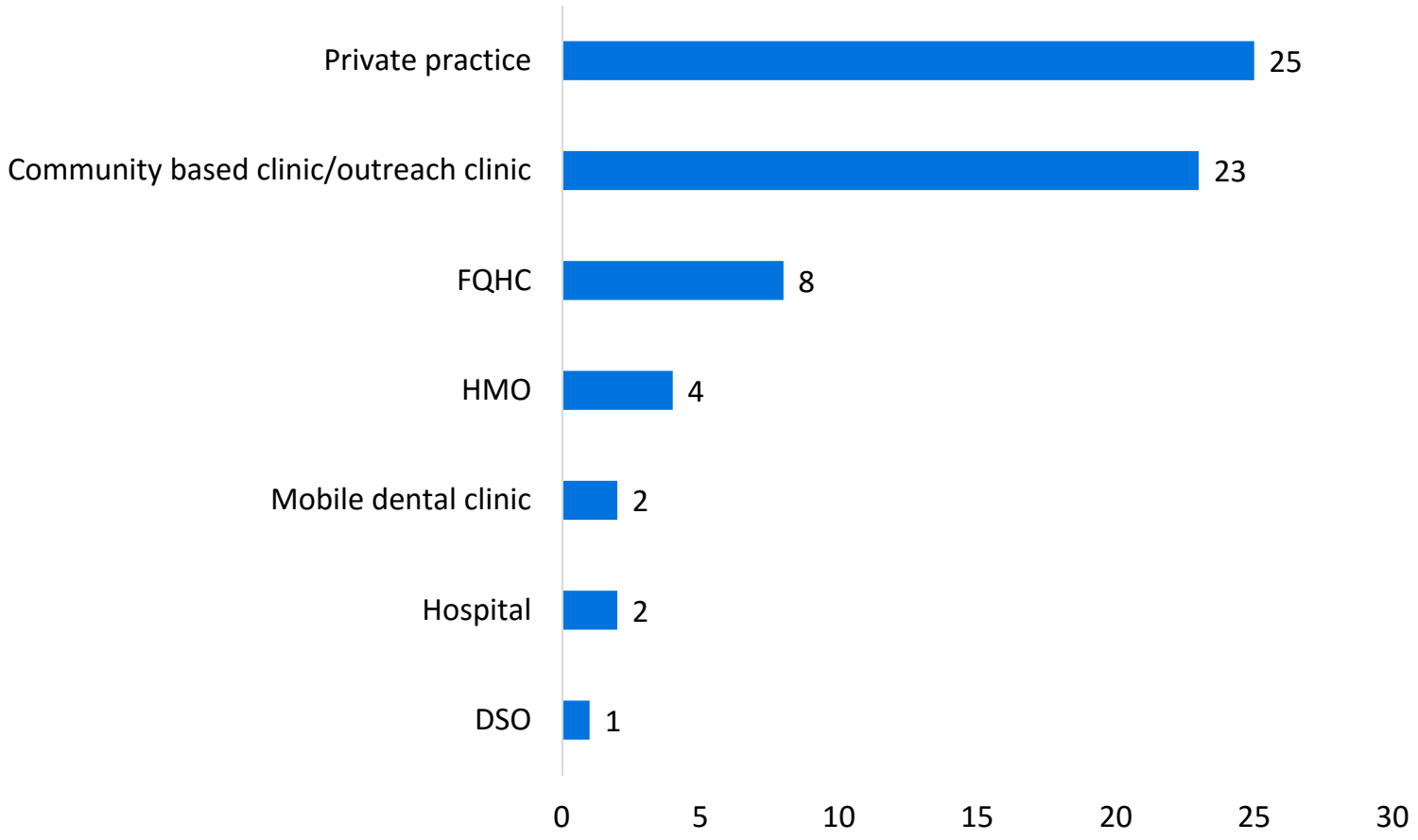
Dental Therapy Workforce

As of August 2016:

- **64 Dental therapists**
- **26 Advanced dental therapists**

Data from Minnesota Board of Dentistry

Practice Settings



Data from Minnesota Board of Dentistry, August 2016:
only those with work setting information

N = 58
May work at more than one location

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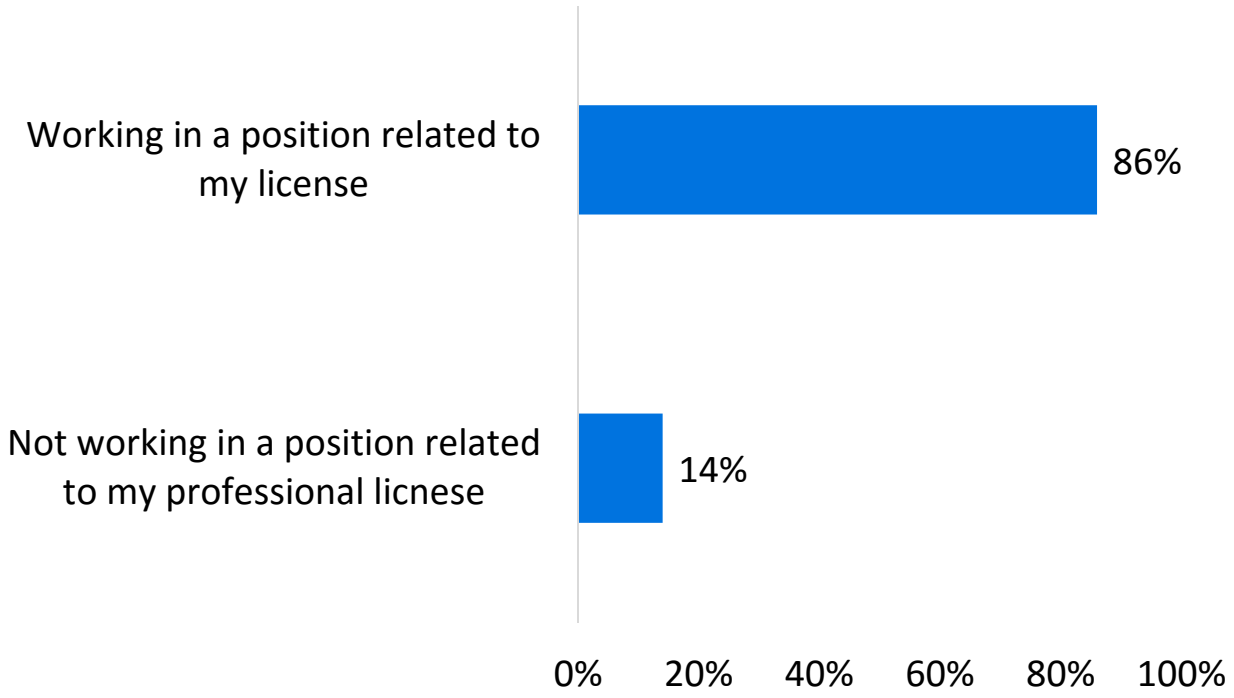
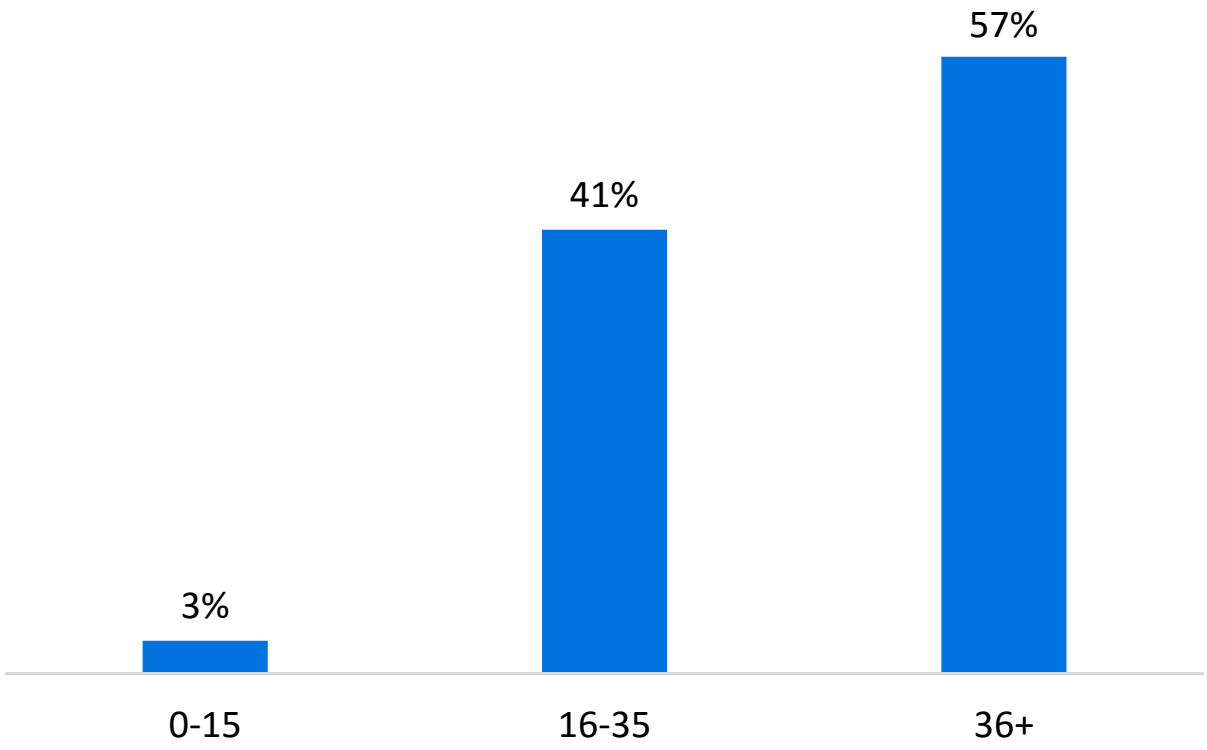
Work Status



- If not working, 3 are working in another field, 1 is seeking a DT position and 1 is temporarily not working

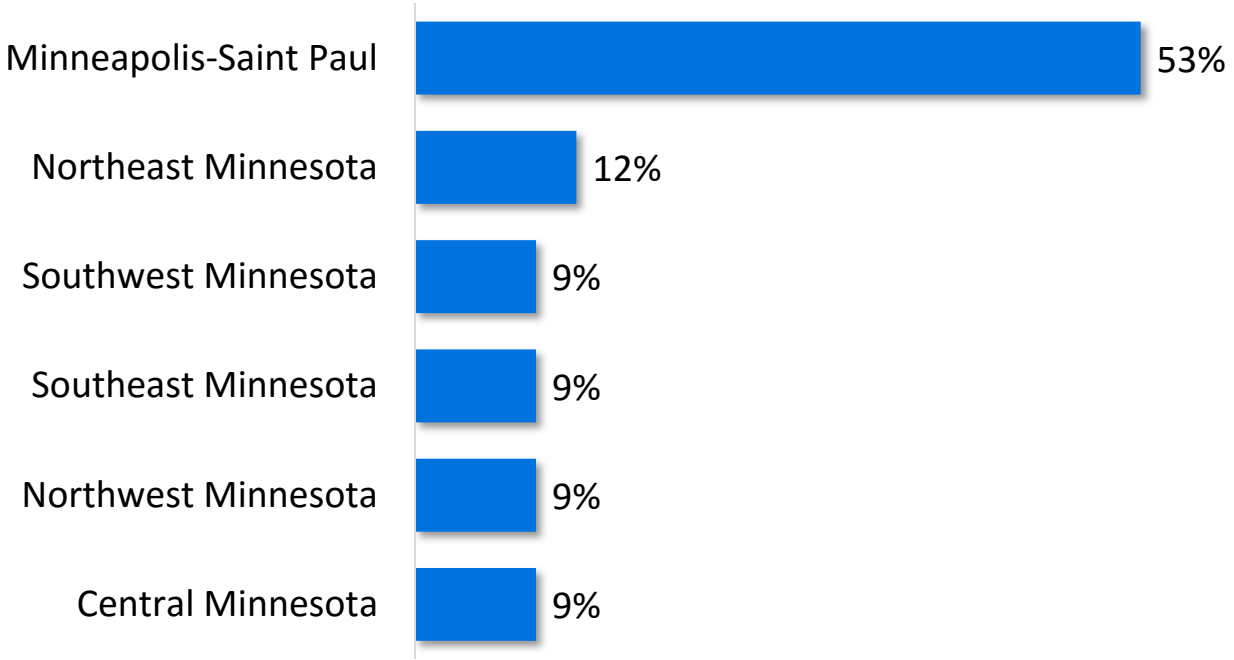
Hours Worked

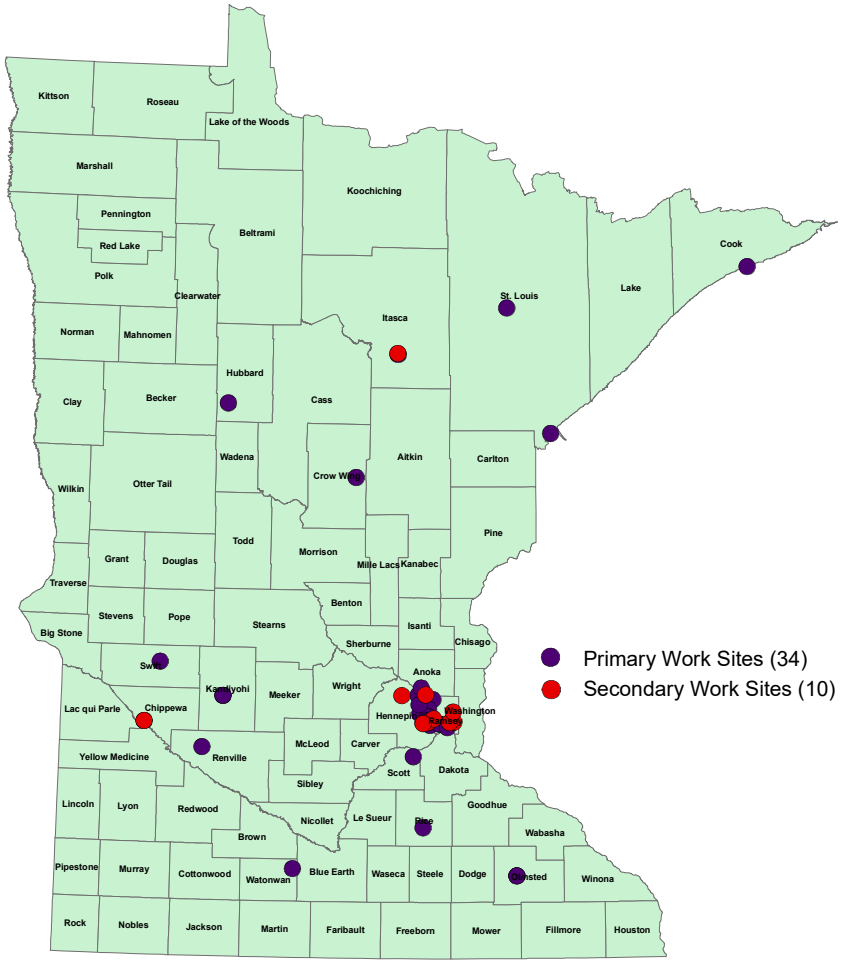


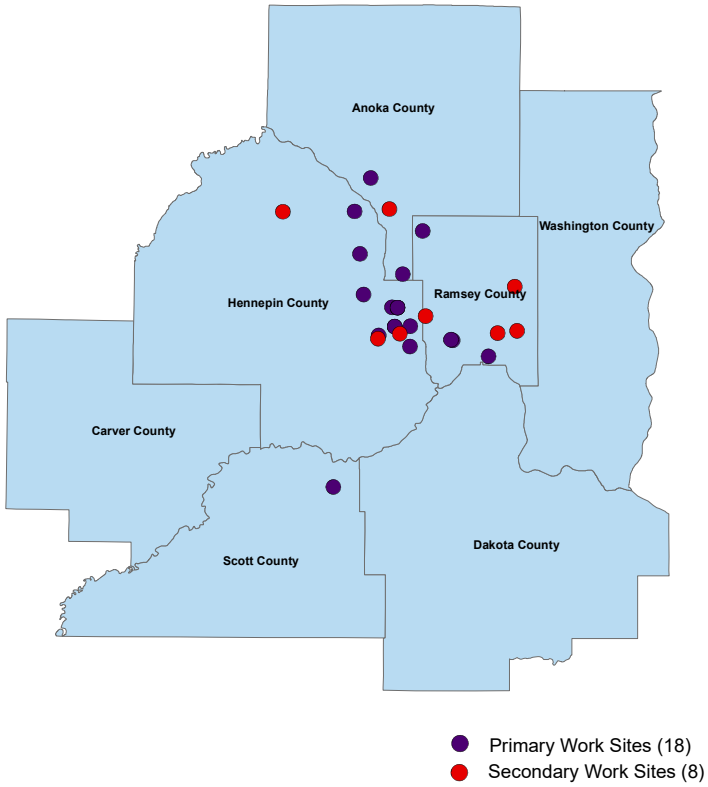
Changes Since 2014

- **More dental therapists were working in 2015 (86 percent) compared to 2014 (74 percent).**
- **Dental therapists are working more hours in 2015**
  - In 2014, 47 percent worked 36 or more hours compared to 57 percent in 2015

By Region


Minneapolis-Saint Paul
53%
Northeast Minnesota
12%
Southwest Minnesota
9%
Southeast Minnesota
9%
Northwest Minnesota
9%
Central Minnesota
9%





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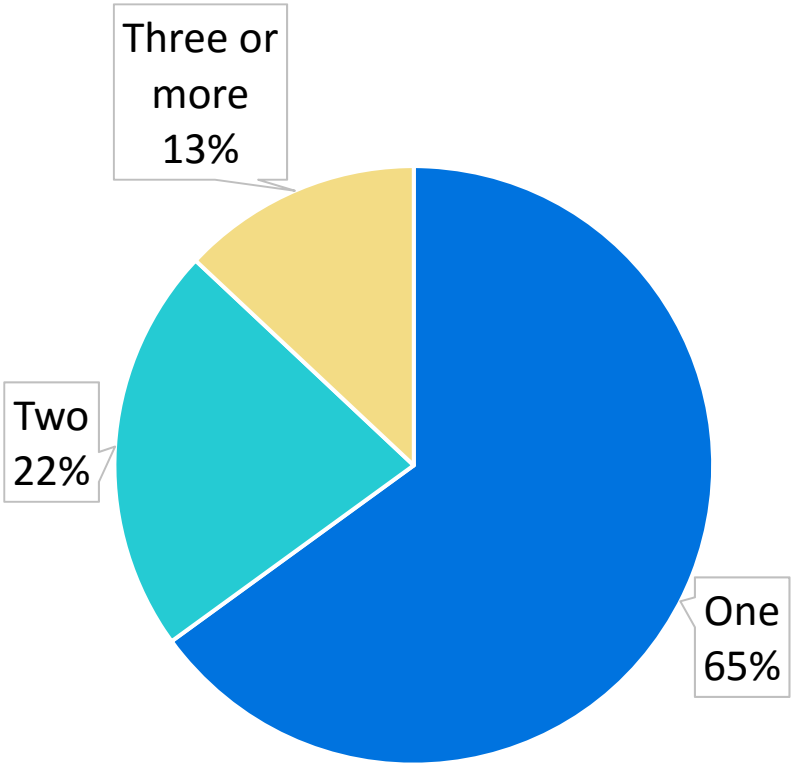
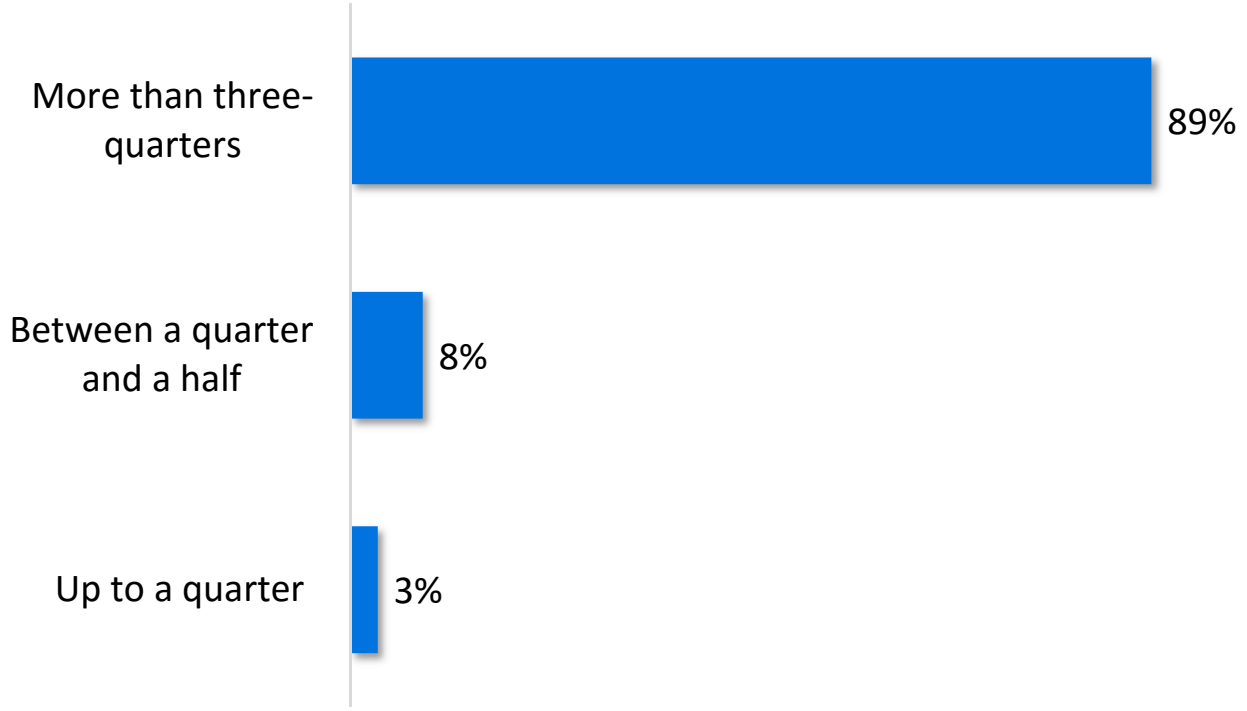
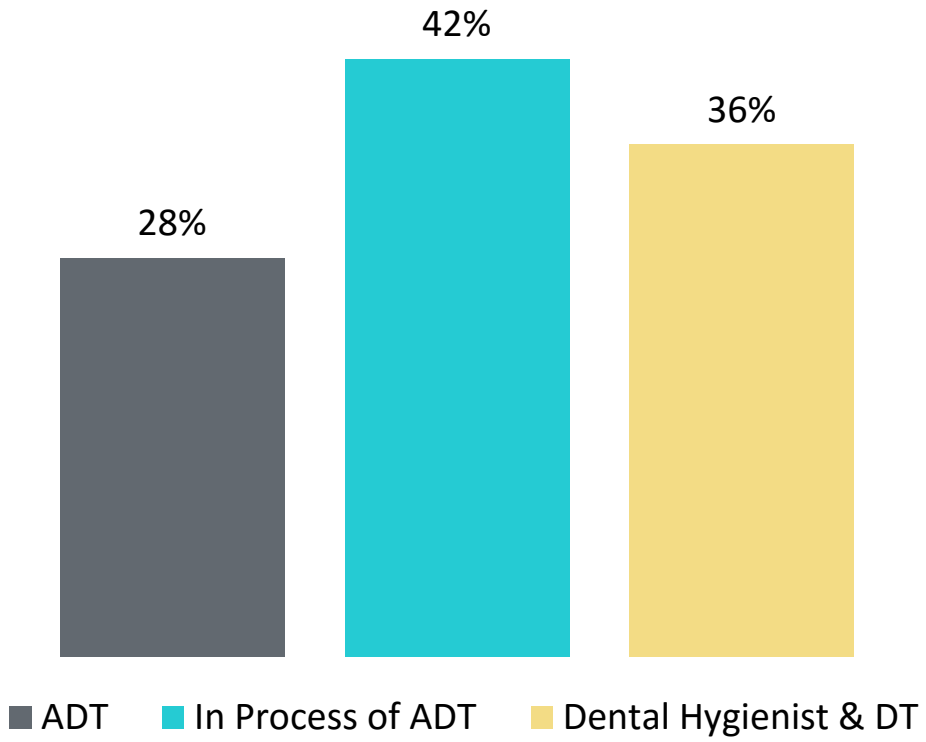
Number of Locations



Patient Care

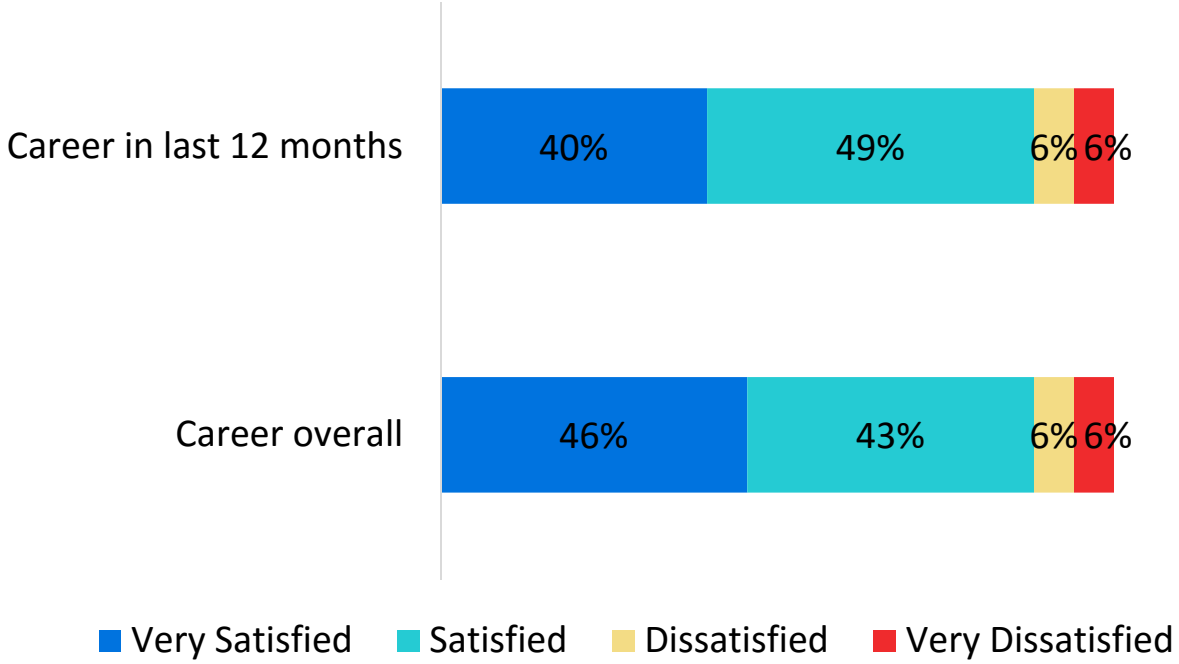


Additional Licenses/Certifications



Career Satisfaction

- The survey asked about satisfaction both in the last 12 months and career overall



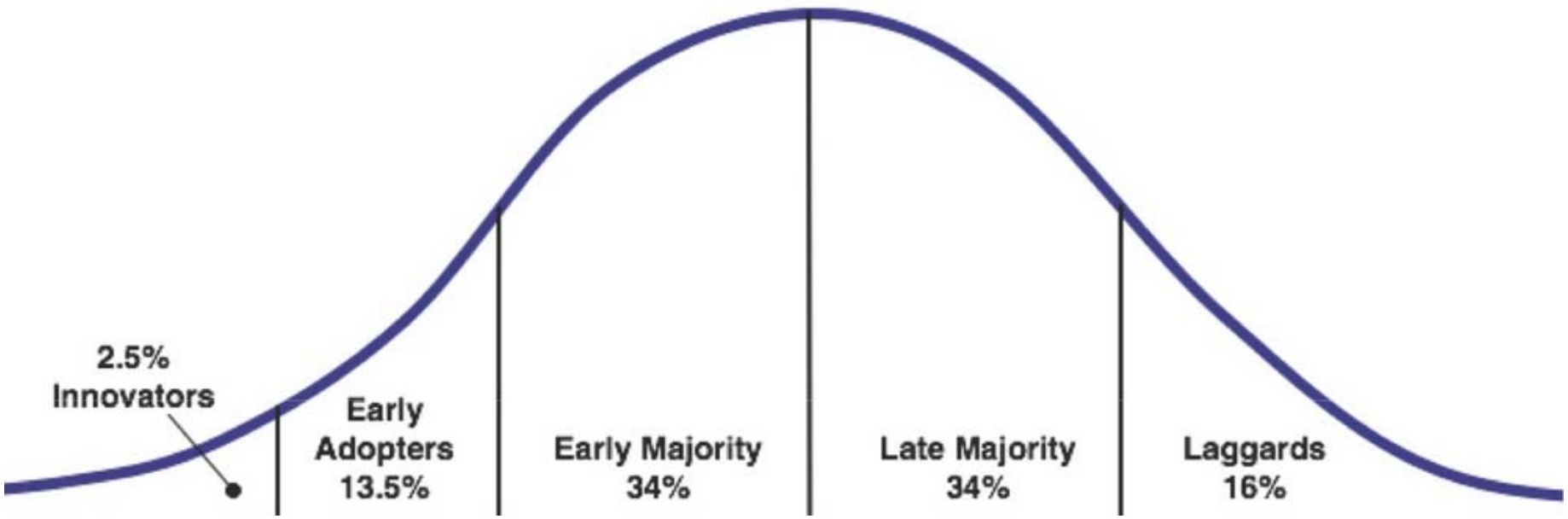
Employer findings Excerpt

From SIM Grant DT Toolkit, 2016

- **Clinics see an economic benefit of hiring DT/ADTs.**
  - Allows dentists to delegate duties and focus on advanced procedures
  - DTs are reimbursed at the same rate but are paid less than dentists.
  - DT/ADTs can be equally as productive as dentists but do not get paid the same.
  - Very helpful to fill in when dentists are out.
  - Roughly $62,500 is saved annually per ADT employed.
- **There may be a lag in time before economic benefits are realized while new hires or new graduates are training.**
  - Most saw adequate production levels after 6 months, which is comparable to hiring a new dentist.

Other Research

- **Dental therapy practice patterns in Minnesota: a baseline study.** Community Dental Oral Epidemiology 2016.
  - Dental therapists are treating a high number of uninsured and underinsured patients, suggesting that they are expanding access to dental care in rural and metropolitan areas of Minnesota. Dentists appear to have an adequate workload for dental therapists and are delegating a full range of procedures within their scope of practice.
- **Dental Therapy Toolkit.** MN Department of Health, 2016.
  - Completed topics include a literature review, environmental scan, dental therapist and advanced dental therapist interviews, current employer interviews, potential employer interviews, and summary of dental therapy regulatory and payment processes.
  - Final Toolkit, due in October, will also cover patient acceptance, office staff acceptance, dentist-dental therapist relationships, reimbursement, oral health team integration, economic benefits, etc.
- **Rural Private Practice case studies**. Delta Dental of Minnesota, forthcoming.


2.5%
Innovators
Early
Adopters
13.5%
Early Majority
34%
Late Majority
34%
Laggards
16%

Ongoing

- **Board of Dentistry**
  - Manages licensing and regulatory process
- **Health Department**
  - Routine data collection and analysis – license/survey data
    - Same as dentists, hygienists, assistants
  - Emerging professions support
  - Loan forgiveness for dental therapists
- **Education programs**
- **Profession**
  - MN Dental Therapy Association

Laura McLain, Senior Research Analyst

Office of Rural Health and Primary Care

Minnesota Department of Health

laura.mclain@state.mn.us , 651-201-3886

Mark Schoenbaum, Director

Office of Rural Health and Primary Care

Minnesota Department of Health

mark.schoenbaum@state.mn.us , 651-201-3859