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## **Dental Care for the Underserved**

### **What is an RDHAP?**

(Registered Dental Hygienist in Alternative Practice)

- A new licensure category created by an act of the California Legislature
- Provides access to care for preventive dental hygiene services to the homebound and patients in nursing homes, schools, residential care facilities and the institutionalized. Under the scope of practice RDHAP's can see these patients without a dentist's supervision.
- RDHAP's can provide care in their own offices to patients in Health Professional Shortage Areas as certified by the Office of Statewide Planning and Development.
- An RDHAP receives additional education in the care of special needs populations such as the developmentally disabled, physically and mentally handicapped, children, and seniors.
- RDHAP's have special training for delivering care in the nursing home and assisted living settings.
- The RDHAP is required to have been practicing for 2000 hours in the past three years, have a BA or its equivalent, take an additional 150 hours of post graduate course work, and must complete a certifying educational program and an examination on California law and ethics.
- Many nursing home residents do not receive routine preventive care
- Addresses the oral health needs of California's aging population
- Promotes and provides education on prevention of oral health diseases and total health to the public, special needs and senior caregivers, other professionals, and the legislature and other government agencies.