



## Mid-Atlantic Advocacy Academy ASDA Districts 2, 3, and 4



# Mid-Level Providers

The American Student Dental Association (ASDA) has outlined the functions of dental providers in Policy Number C-2. In this policy, ASDA believes that a dentist should only be able to carry out certain procedures on the public. This includes:

- Diagnosis and treatment planning
- Prescribing work authorizations
- Performing irreversible dental procedures
- Prescribing drugs and/or other medications

Mid-Level providers were introduced into the United States as a way to combat several barriers to care, especially in places such as Alaska where dental providers are scarce. ASDA characterizes a midlevel provider as, “an individual, who is not a dentist with four years of post-collegiate education, who may perform irreversible procedures on the public.” In 2005, Alaska implemented a dental health aid therapist position under tribal authority. In 2009, Minnesota then became the first state to adopt the model of both dental therapists and advanced dental therapists. These dental therapist are allowed to perform preventative and limited restorative services alone with prescribing medications. Today, Alaska, Minnesota, Maine, and Vermont have currently practicing dental therapists in an effort to mostly target low-income and dental shortage areas.

While there is certainly a need to combat barriers to care, ASDA holds strong to the ideal that everyone still deserves the same high quality, standard of care. This includes having a four year, dental degree in order to perform the functions as outlined in the C-2 policy. It is also important to note that the underserved patients served by dental therapists often have more difficult and sometimes systemic health conditions. Having a less educated provider is not only jeopardizing their dental care in terms of irreversible procedures, but it is also jeopardizing their health and safety.

In order to combat the growing field of mid-level providers, ASDA has urged lawmakers to oppose mid-level provider legislation. Alternative proposals include supporting the ADA’s Action for Dental Health Act, starting and expanding ER referral programs, instilling community dental health coordinators, and utilizing teledentistry.