

North Dakota Health Professions: Oral Health - Dentists

Spring 2005

The Center for Rural Health at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences conducted the North Dakota Dental Survey in 2004 due to growing concerns about a critical shortage of dentists in North Dakota and the nation. The survey was designed to examine demographics, educational background, practice profiles, practice arrangements, and patient profile information. Survey data is collected and analyzed through the Center for Rural Health's Health Profession Tracking Program. This is a statewide healthcare provider tracking system with the ability to create and maintain a comprehensive inventory of North Dakota's critical healthcare resources and monitor workforce trends in North Dakota. Comprehensive results of the survey are available at <http://medicine.nodak.edu/crh>.

Demographics

In 2004, North Dakota had 316 licensed dentists¹:

- ❖ Ninety percent are male which is similar to the national percentage².
- ❖ Ninety-seven percent are non-Hispanic, white compared to 87 percent nationally³.
- ❖ Fifty-one percent were born in North Dakota.
- ❖ Sixty percent plan to retire within the next 15 years.
- ❖ The average age of North Dakota dentists is 52 years compared with 49 years nationally².
- ❖ Seventy-three percent practice general dentistry compared with 80 percent in the U.S.²

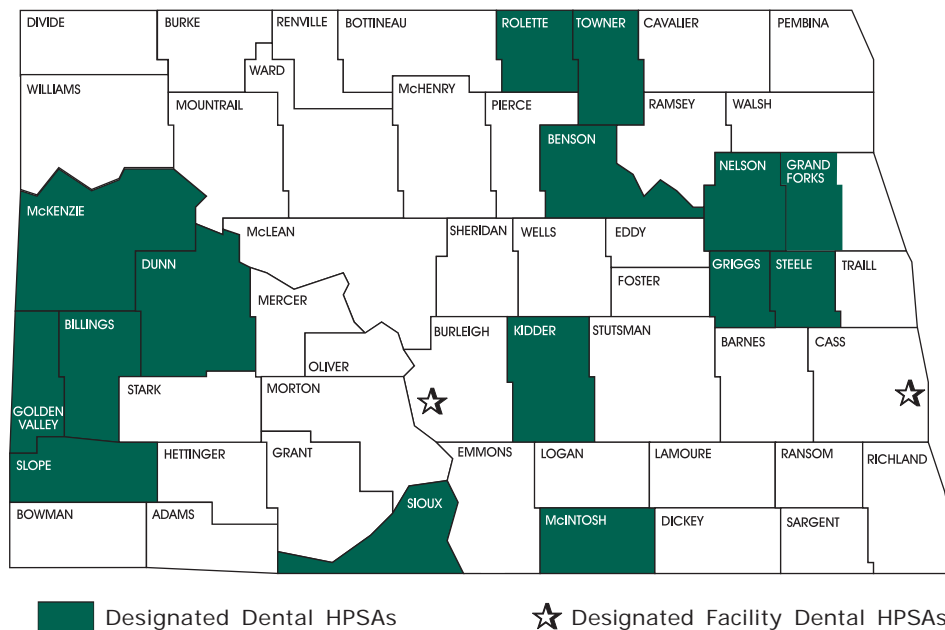
Education and Training

- ❖ Fifty-five percent of North Dakota's licensed dentists were trained at the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry.
- ❖ Over half graduated in 1980 or before.
- ❖ North Dakota has a federal grant program to provide rural, community-based interdisciplinary experiences for students in dentistry, medicine, nursing, social work, and psychology⁴.

Dental Demand

Demand is often measured by calculating factors related to the dental practice, i.e., number of dentists to population, number of dental hygienists, hours worked, and procedures performed. Thirty percent (16/53) of North Dakota's 53 counties are federally designated as Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (see Figure 1).

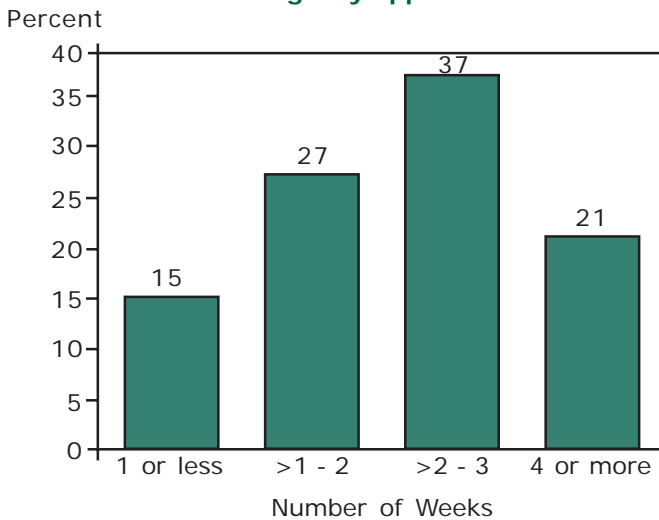
Figure 1. North Dakota Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas



Employment Characteristics of Dentists:

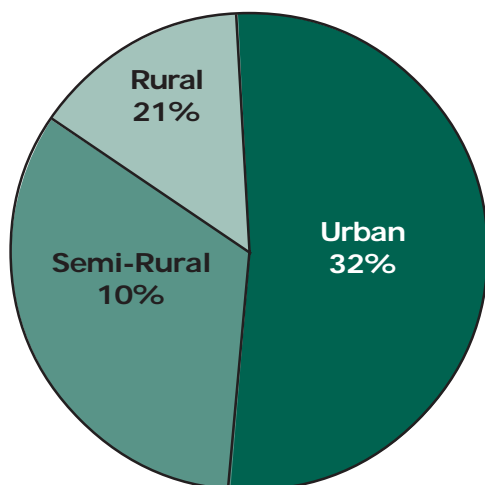
- ❖ Eighty-six percent are employed full-time compared to 75 percent nationally. Over half are self-employed which is slightly higher than the national average⁵.
- ❖ Seventy-seven percent actively seek new patients.
- ❖ Rural dentists are more likely to accept all Medicaid patients.
- ❖ Twenty-six percent in the Northwest, 25% in the Southwest, 17% in the Southeast, and 7% in the Northeast region of the state accept any and all Medicaid patients that present for treatment.
- ❖ Forty-two percent of the population can schedule appointments for non-emergency treatment in less than two weeks (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Average Time to be Seen for Non-Emergency Appointments



- ❖ Thirty-two percent of North Dakota dentists in urban locations, 21 percent in semi-rural, and 10 percent in rural locations plan to retire in 15 years or less (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Retirement by Rurality Between 2005 & 2020⁶



Footnotes:

- ¹ North Dakota Department of Health Database 2004.
- ² American Dental Association. *The 1999 Survey of Dental Practice. Characteristics of Dentists in Private Practice and Their Patients*. Chicago: American Dental Association – Survey Center February 2001.
- ³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions. *State Health Workforce Profiles, 2004*.
- ⁴ Award through the National Health Services Corps Students/residents Experiences And Rotations in Community Health (SEARCH) Program, Bureau of Health Professions, Health Resources and Services Administration.
- ⁵ The growing challenge of providing oral health care services to all Americans, (2002, September/October). *Health Affairs*, 21(5).
- ⁶ Urban Influence Codes are used to classify rurality of U.S. counties according to the size of neighboring metropolitan areas, proximity to metropolitan areas, and the population of the largest city within the county. North Dakota counties were collapsed into three larger categories based upon their Urban Influence Codes. Urban Counties: Those small metropolitan counties (fewer than one million residents including four North Dakota counties). Semi-rural counties: Those non-metropolitan counties with a town of at least 2,500 residents adjacent or not adjacent to a small metropolitan county (20 North Dakota counties). Rural counties: Those counties that do not contain a town with at least 2,500 residents and are not adjacent to a small metropolitan area (29 North Dakota counties).

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