



## Oral Health Care in North Dakota Long Term Care Facilities

*This fact sheet is Number 2 in a series of analyses regarding oral health in North Dakota.*

Long term care (LTC) facilities refer to those identified as providing skilled nursing or basic care services. The state licenses basic care facilities; they are not certified by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to participate in the Medicare/Medicaid programs but are instead eligible for state funding for provided services. A skilled nursing facility is federally designated and may be part of a nursing home or hospital. CMS certifies these facilities if they have the staff and equipment to give skilled nursing care, therapy services, and/or other related health services. In 2016 there were 80 skilled nursing care facilities and 68 basic care. Urban facilities were more likely to be skilled nursing than rural.

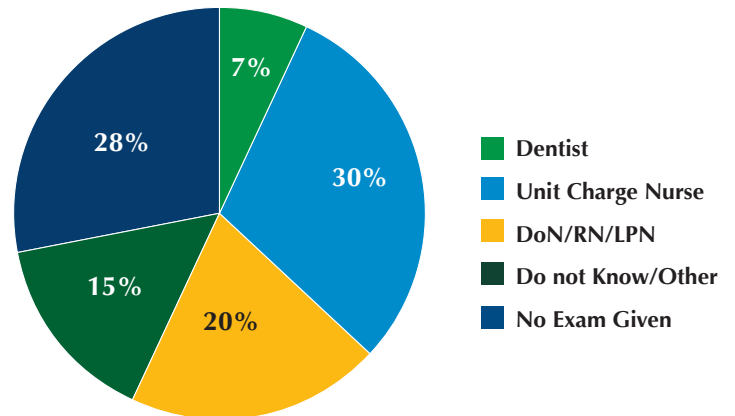
**Table 1. Survey Participants' Facility Type by Rural-Urban Status**

Rural/ Urban Status	Skilled Nursing		Basic Care		Skilled & Basic Combined	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Urban	10	59%	4	24%	3	18%
Rural	10	40%	7	28%	8	32%
All	20	48%	11	26%	11	26%

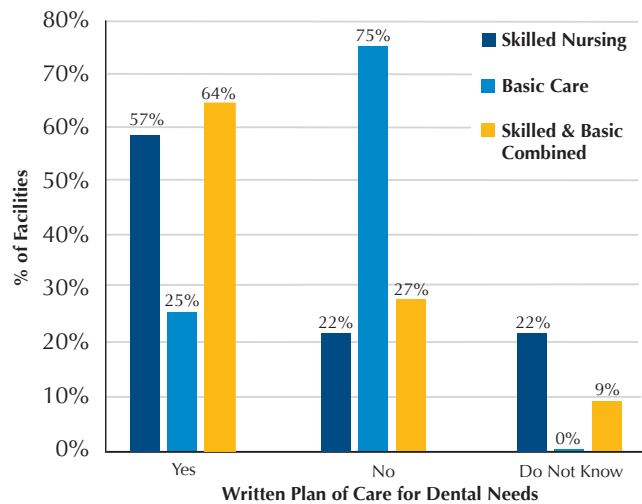
Oral health was a high or essential priority for a majority of LTC facilities (72%). While important, facilities did not report a strong culture of oral health.

- Only 50% of LTC facilities had a written plan of care for dental needs in place.
- A dental professional reviewed, or assisted with, the written plan of care among only 3 facilities.
- Only 7% of all participating LTC facilities indicated the initial oral health exam was completed by a dental professional.

**Figure 1. Provider Responsible for Initial Oral Health Exam of New Residents**

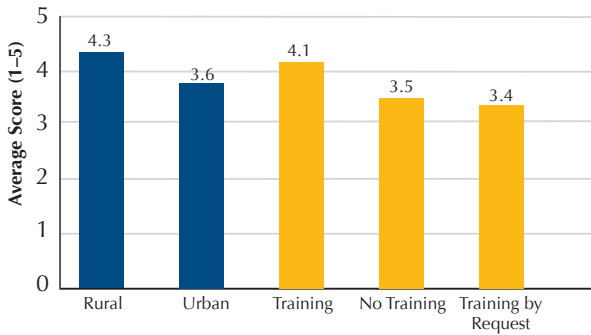


**Figure 2. Percent of LTC Facilities with Written Plan of Care for Dental Needs**



A large majority (78%) of LTC facilities provided oral health care training to their staff. However, only 14% were aware of the Smiles for Life Curriculum<sup>a</sup> offered at no cost by the North Dakota Department of Health. Facilities that indicated providing oral health training were more likely than those with no training or training only by request to rate oral health as an essential priority.

**Figure 3. Average Oral Health Priority by Training, and Rural-Urban Status**



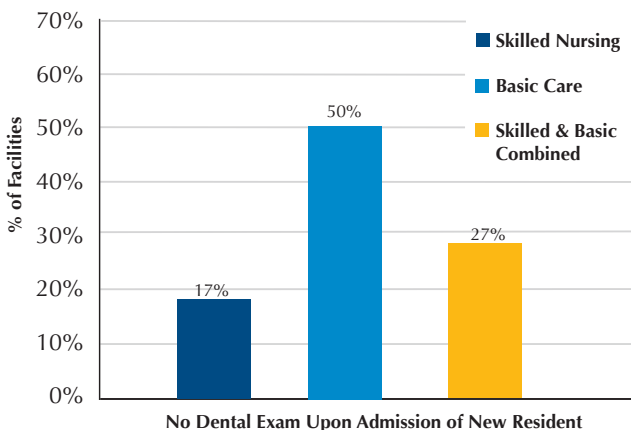
### Rural-Urban Variation

- Resident daily oral health care was a greater priority for rural than urban LTC facilities.
- Rural LTC facilities (80%) were more likely than urban (59%) to have a list of dental providers for resident referral.
- Roughly 48% of rural LTC facilities reported 50% or more of their residents were responsible for their own daily oral health care compared to 20% of urban facilities.
- Rural LTC residents had a shorter wait to see the dentist for non-emergent dental problems than urban.

### Skilled Nursing & Basic Care Facility Variation

- Skilled nursing facilities were more likely (57%) than basic care (25%) to have a written plan of care for dental needs in place.
- Oral health care and services training was less likely in basic care facilities (50% provided training) than nursing (87%), and nursing and basic care combined (91%).
- Basic care facilities more frequently do not complete an oral health exam upon admission of a new resident than skilled nursing facilities.

**Figure 3. Percent of Facilities that Do Not Complete a Dental Exam at Admission**



### Conclusions

Oral health was an identified priority among participating LTC facilities. However, a very low percentage of facilities overall had systems in place to meet the oral health needs of residents. Likewise, those with policies or procedures lacked collaboration or oversight from dental professionals (including dentists, dental hygienists, and/or dental assistants).

### Recommendations

It is recommended that LTC facilities create strong relationships with local oral health providers.

- Dental professionals should be involved in the development of facility written plans of care for dental needs.
- LTC facilities should require specific geriatric oral health training for all staff, utilizing the free Smiles for Life Curriculum.
- All residents should receive an oral health exam upon admission into a basic or skilled nursing care facility, completed by a dental hygienist or dentist.

### Data

*Data were derived from a survey of all LTC basic and skilled nursing care facility in North Dakota, completed in December 2015. The electronic survey had a 32% response rate.*

<sup>a</sup>Smiles for Life is a free, online oral health training curriculum. Health-care providers may take advantage of this training to develop knowledge about a variety of oral health care issues. The online training includes the following courses: geriatric oral health; adult oral health; the oral examination; the relationship of oral to systemic health; child oral health; acute dental problems; oral health and the pregnant patient; and, caries risk assessment, fluoride varnish and counseling.

Learn more about Smiles for Life: [www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth/ndsmilesforlife.htm](http://www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth/ndsmilesforlife.htm).

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