

Dental Therapy: Improving Access to Care

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What is a Dental Therapist

An oral health practitioner who works under the supervision of a licensed dentist. A member of the health care team who is educated to provide evaluative, preventive, restorative, and minor surgical dental care within their scope of practice.



What is a Dental Therapist

- DTs engage in oral health prevention and promotional activities including:
 - motivational interviewing
 - oral health education
 - oral screenings
 - caries risk assessment
 - referrals.
- DTs engage patients in community-based, alternative practice settings



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The Value of Dental Therapists

- Complementary to dentists
- Extends reach of dental practices
- Similar to physician's assistants in medicine
- Increases economic viability for dental practices treating underserved patients
- Team-based care allows dentists to focus on more complex procedures

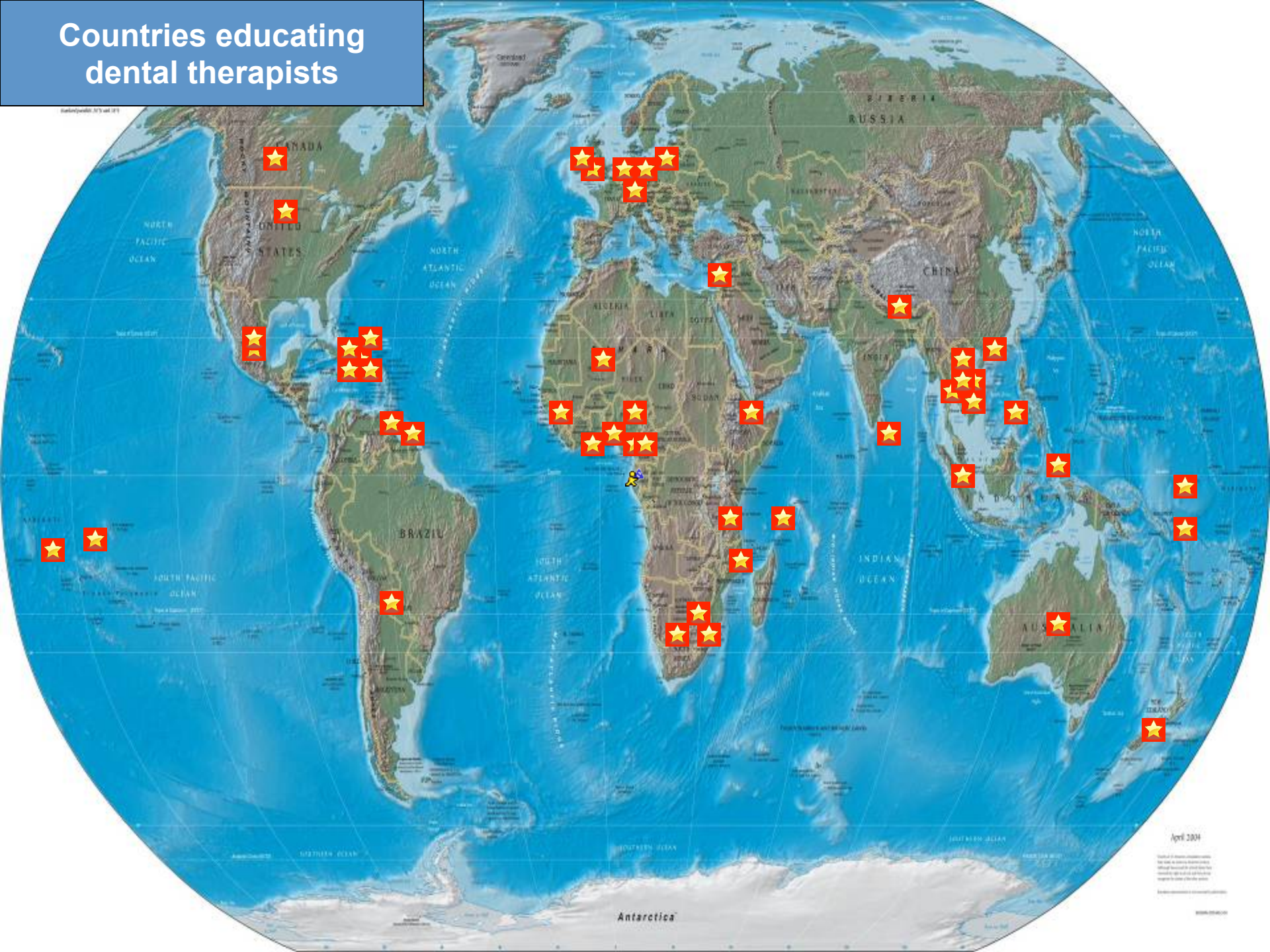


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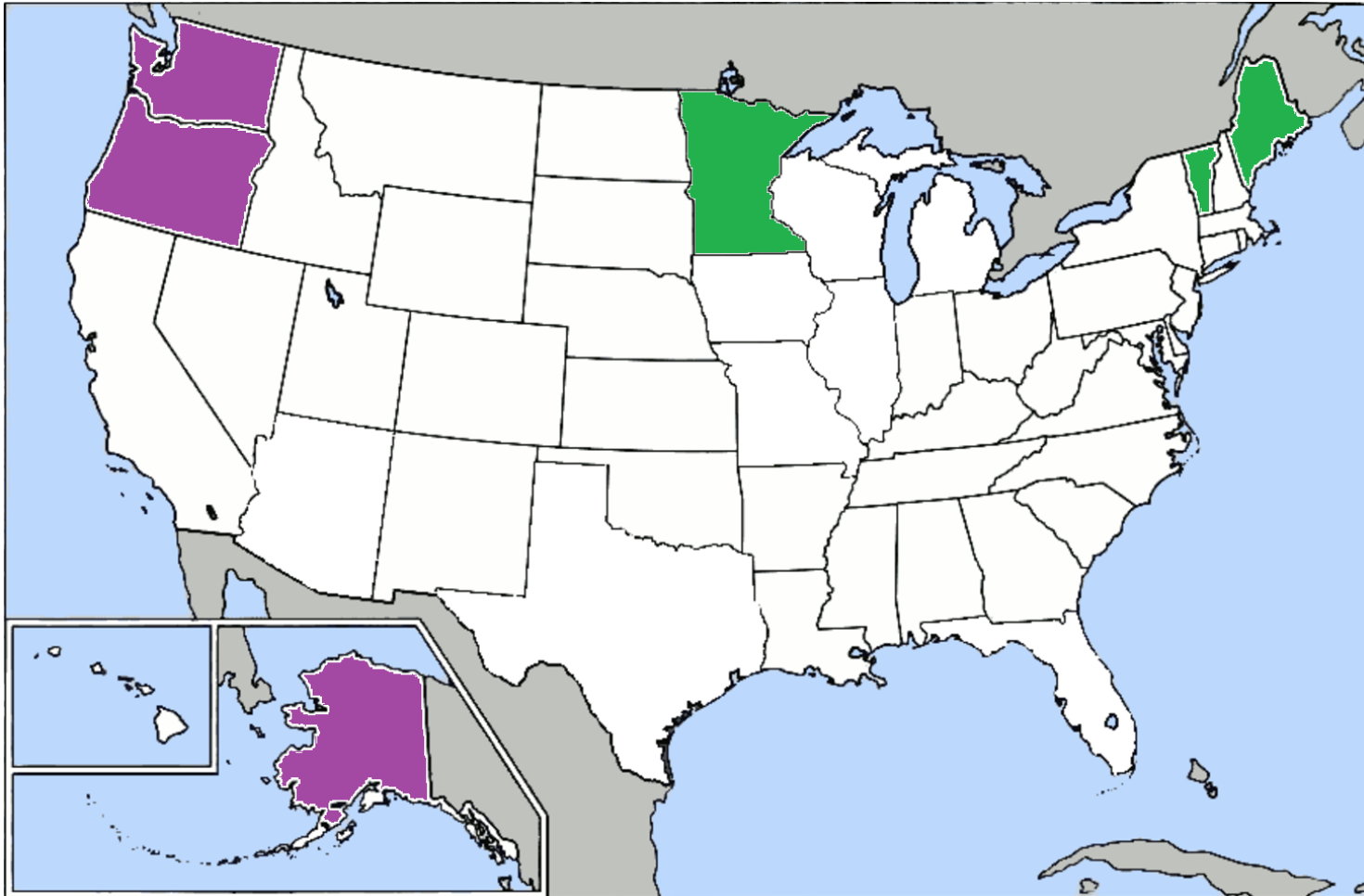
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Countries educating dental therapists



Dental Therapy in the U.S.



**State
Authority**

**Tribal
Authority**



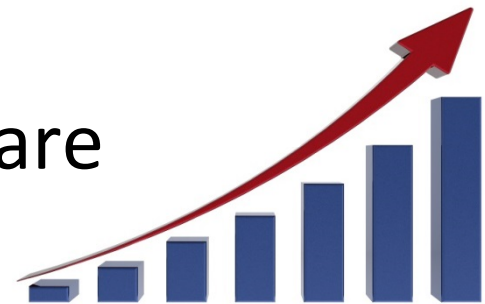
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MN - DT Employment

- 63 Licensed Dental Therapists
 - As of August 2016
- 95% of DTs seeking employment are employed
- All are in settings that serve low-income, uninsured and underserved populations; or dental professional shortage area



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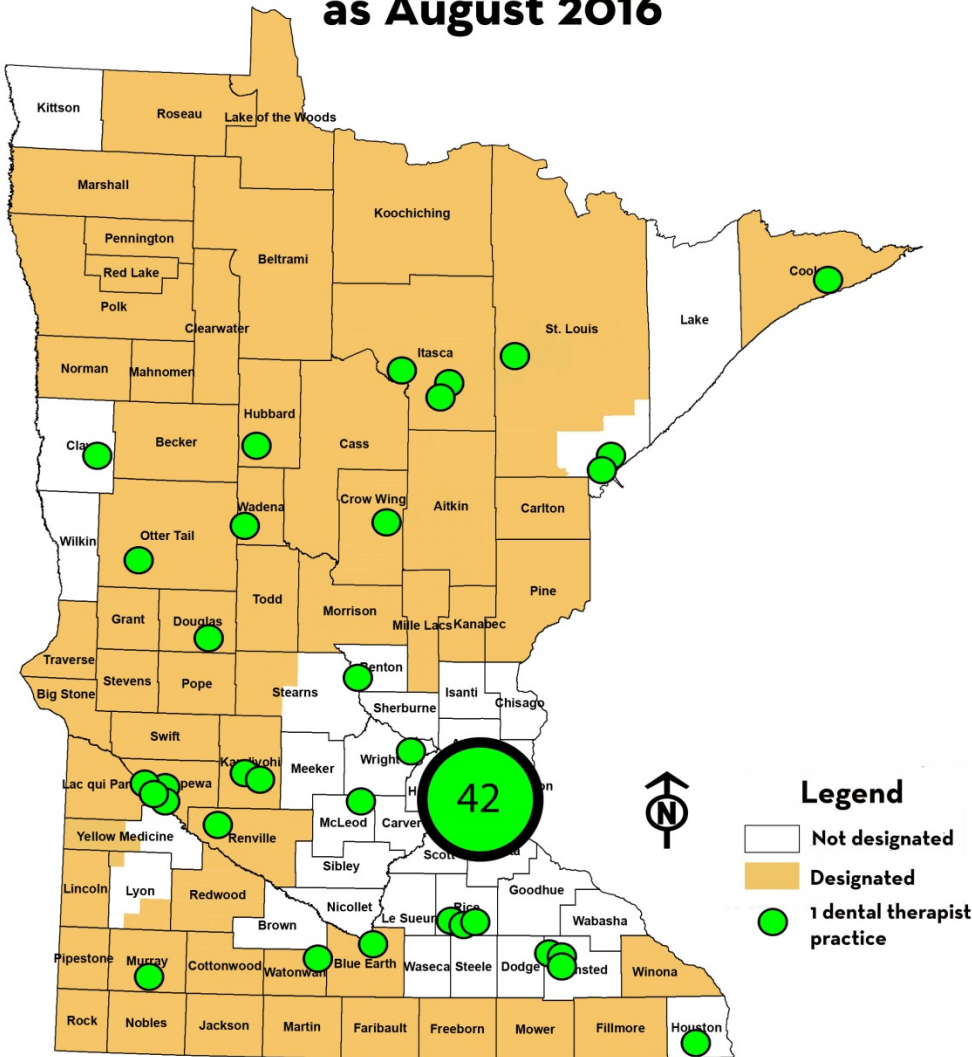
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MN Dental Therapists in Practice by Health Professional Shortage Areas as August 2016

Dental Therapy Employment Sites by County

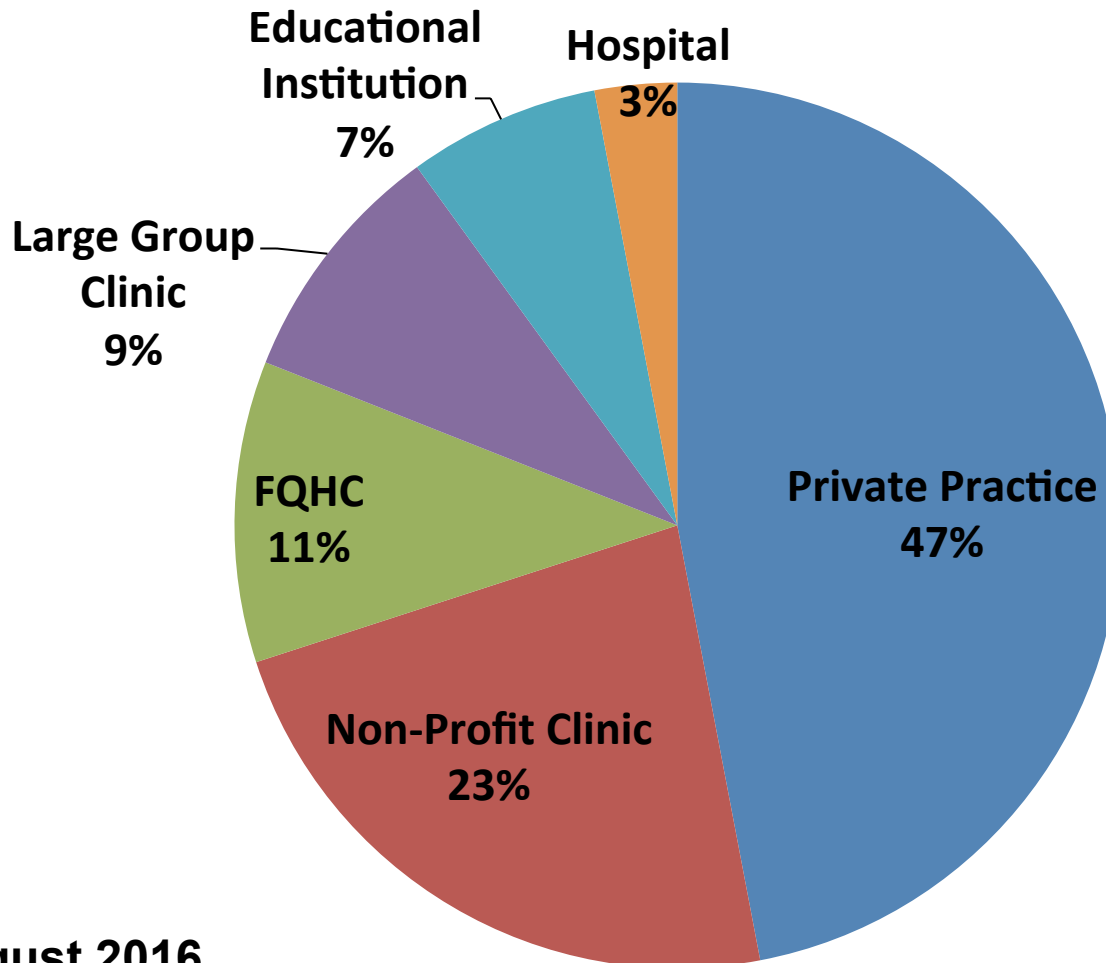
Metro Area – 52%
Greater MN – 48%



This map provided by the University of MN
School of Dentistry
Data Source:
Minnesota Department of Health
Office of Rural Health and Primary Care
State DD HPSA Nov 2014

* As of August 2016

MN - DT Employment Settings



* As of August 2016

Impact and Effectiveness

- Decreased travel and wait times
- Clinics saw more new underserved and Medicaid patients
- Increased dental team productivity
- Reduced clinic operating costs
- **No complaints or concerns** about quality or safety
- DTs working in a variety of treatment settings



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Early Impacts of Dental Therapists in Minnesota

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

February 2014



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