

# Ensuring Equitable Licensing Pathways for Limited-Licensed Dentists

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## I. Introduction

This document summarizes findings from a qualitative interview with a Massachusetts dental director regarding the impact of **Limited Licensed Dentists (LLDs)** including foreign trained dentists on access to oral healthcare within community health centers in Massachusetts. Insights from this interview highlight the essential and longstanding contribution of LLDs to underserved populations, as well as significant licensure and policy barriers that affect workforce capacity.

## II. Concepts:

<p>Access to Oral Health Care</p>	<p>LLDs play a crucial role in expanding capacity in community health centers. According to one dental director, <i>“Foreign trained limited dentists have been the backbone of community health centers. They stay long-term, they adapt well, and they help us keep our doors open.”</i></p>
<p>Oral Health Knowledge</p>	<p>Foreign trained dentists bring diverse clinical backgrounds and experiences. <i>“There is no difference in the quality of care our LLDs provide. They meet the same standards and follow the same protocols.”</i></p>
<p>Oral Health Workforce</p>	<p>Community health centers experience high turnover among U.S. trained dentists, who often transition to private practice shortly after graduation. <i>“Many of our LLDs stay for 5, 10, even 20 years. That level of retention is rare among U.S. trained dentists.”</i></p>
<p>Surveillance, Measurement, Evaluation</p>	<p>Information may be available through the Mass League of Community Health Centers, which routinely surveys safety-net clinics.</p>

### III. Access to Oral Healthcare

LLDs significantly improve accessibility in underserved communities by increasing appointment availability, reducing wait lists, and supporting continuity of care. Their presence fills workforce gaps during shortage periods and stabilizes service delivery.

## IV. Oral Health Knowledge

Onboarding for LLDs includes:

- *Supervised training*
- *Four-handed dentistry and supervised calibration*
- *Stepwise clinical integration (perio, restorative, endo, prosth)*
- *Required BLS, infection control, OSHA courses*
- *Continuing Education (20 CE units/year)*
- *Free access to Mass League and Yankee Dental Trainings*

## V. Oral Health Workforce

Foreign trained LLDs serve as a stable, long term workforce, especially as U.S. trained DMDs frequently move to private practice. LLDs tend to remain longer and integrate well into teams. Their presence ensures that community clinics continue providing essential services.

## VI. Surveillance, Measurement, Evaluation

Reliable data is essential for improving and maintaining equitable licensure pathways.

## VII. Program Overview

Community health centers support professional development through mentorship based training and inter-provider collaboration.

## VIII. Importance

*“If we support foreign-trained limited-licensed dentists, they will support our communities. They are committed, they work hard, and they stay.”*

## IX. Policy Recommendations

Recognize the long term retention and high quality care LLDs

## X. Conclusion

Limited-Licensed Dentists are a vital component of the oral health workforce in Massachusetts. Their presence supports access, maintains quality, and ensures continuity of care in underserved areas. Policymakers should consider their positive impact as they evaluate licensure structures and workforce pathways.