



THE VOICE OF
DENTAL EDUCATION

The Dental Workforce:

Title VII of the Public Health Service Act provides funding for health professions workforce training. The dental component of Title VII is provided for in Section 748: Training in General, Pediatric, and Public Health Dentistry and Dental Hygiene. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) administers these grants that support predoctoral dental and dental hygiene programs, advanced dental education (postdoctoral dental residencies), faculty development, and dental faculty loan repayment, for general, pediatric, and public health dentistry.

Section 748 addresses the shortage of professors in dental schools with the dental faculty loan repayment program and faculty development courses for those who teach pediatric, general, or public health dentistry or dental hygiene. These two programs provide schools with assistance in recruiting and retaining faculty. ADEA is increasingly concerned that the oral health research community is not growing and that the pipeline of new researchers is inadequate to address future needs.

One goal of Title VII programs is to motivate health care professionals to practice in underserved communities with the help of such programs as **Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP)**, **Centers of Excellence (COE)**, and **Minority Faculty Fellowship Program (MFFP)**. HCOP helps schools provide opportunities to students from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop the skills needed to enter the health professions. Once students are enrolled in dental school, COE grants enable schools to enhance academic performance of underrepresented minorities (URM) students, improve the recruitment and retention of URM faculty, and increase the capacity of graduates to provide care to the underserved. MFFP assists schools increase the number of URM members serving on their faculties.



Title VII **Pediatric Dentistry (PD)** and **General Dentistry (GD)** residency programs have positively influenced the diversity dental pipeline; 30% of residents in Title VII-funded PD programs are underrepresented minorities, a percentage that significantly exceeds the 13.5% rate in all PD programs. While similar data for GD grantees are not available, nearly 21% of all GD program residents are underrepresented minorities compared to 11.25% for all dental specialties. These programs are significant because students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to return to those areas to serve the communities.

The results stemming from the Title VII programs are clearly seen in academic dental institutions. According to the most recent information dental schools and community-based clinics provide nearly 3 million patient visits annually. All 66 dental schools in the United States have clinics, and a large percentage of the schools have student rotations in community health centers. Each year dental

school clinics provide more than \$74 million in uncompensated patient care and procedures, these clinics fees are less than half of what customary rates would be.

Title VII funds assist dental schools in expanding access to care, while providing students and residents with the innovative training they need to serve multi-faceted, underserved communities. Reductions to the Title VII programs would undoubtedly result in diminished access to oral health care for disadvantaged, underserved, and aging populations at a time when those populations have been growing.



The authorizing language focused on a number of priorities for academic dental institutions (ADIs) because of the unique nature of the communities we serve. Programs receive a higher priority for funding when the programs have high rates of graduates practicing in underserved communities, train individuals who are from rural or underserved communities, establish formal relationships with federally qualified health centers or rural health centers, and serve the homeless, victims of abuse or trauma, older adults, and individuals with HIV/AIDS. Ultimately, this funding supports dental student rotations in community health clinics, improves care for at risk populations, enhances cultural competence curriculum, and provides opportunities to integrate public health dentistry into clinical dental education programs.

There are 4,629 Dental Shortage Areas in the United States; more than 45 million people live in these areas without enough dentists to provide care. Title VII has created over 560 new general dentist positions in the past 25 years and 200 new pediatric dentist positions in the past 15 years but there continues to be a shortage of pediatric dentists in the United States (6,100) and public health dentists (1,300). Pediatric dentists are specially trained to care for children and individuals with special needs. Public health dentistry focuses on the oral health of the population. They implement programs such as oral health literacy, school sealants, screenings, and fluoride. Public health dentistry is the most cost effective way to prevent dental disease. Title VII provides additional funding for these programs.

Support for these programs will help to ensure there will be an adequate oral health care workforce to care for the American public. The funding supports pre-doctoral oral health education and postdoctoral pediatric, general, and public health dentistry training. The investment that Title VII makes not only helps to educate dentists and dental hygienists, but also expands access to care for underserved populations.

For more information, please contact:

Yvonne Knight, J.D., Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Government Relations

Phone: 202-289-7201

Email: knighty@adea.com

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