

## Council on Governmental Affairs

### **SENATE BILL 490**

Senate Bill 490, sponsored by Senator Chris Smith (D-West Palm Beach) is FDHA's Access to Care legislation. The bill amends the statutes that regulate the practice of dental hygiene. As in past years, we are focusing on increasing access to care through legislation that will permit dental hygienists to perform the same duties that they are now performing in private practice, in health access settings without the prior authorization or examination by a dentist. Health access settings means programs and institutions of the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Health, the Department of Juvenile Justice, nonprofit community health centers, Head Start centers, federally qualified health centers (FQHC), FQHC look a-likes as defined by federal law and clinics operated by accredited colleges of dentistry in Florida. This definition of health access settings was added to the statutes in 2008. Our language (SB490) would add school based prevention programs and accredited dental hygiene programs into the definition of health access settings. Currently, the bill has been referred to the Health Regulation, Education Pre-K-12 and Health and Human Services Appropriations. The next step will be to get the bill on the agenda for consideration by the Health Regulation Committee. We are planning to submit revised language which will closely resemble the language approved by the Florida Board of Dentistry and the HRSA Oral Health Workforce Workgroup. We have asked the Florida Dental Association to work with us so the final language can be supported by everyone.

### **BACKGROUND**

Tremendous progress was made on workforce issues with the Florida Surgeon General's Florida Practitioner Oral Health Workforce Ad Hoc Committee and then continued through the HRSA Oral Health Workforce Workgroup. FDHA had representation on both of these workforce committees. Reports from each group are available online at [www.oralhealthflorida.org](http://www.oralhealthflorida.org); click on Oral Health Workforce.

The great news is that on October 30, 2009, the Board of Dentistry acted on recommendations from the HRSA Oral Health Workforce Workgroup and passed rule changes that would permit dental hygienists to perform preventive services in health access settings without the prior examination, authorization or physical presence of a dentist. The rules are now going through the notification process. Once through this process they will become effective. This is a great victory for the underserved citizens in our state that are unable to access preventive services in private practices.

Through the HRSA Oral Health Workforce Workgroup, FDHA agreed to champion legislation which would make these changes part of our statutes (law) in Florida. This is an exciting time for dental hygiene. This is what we have worked so hard for many years to accomplish. Finally, the underserved citizens in Florida will have access to preventive oral health services.

### **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

It is important to contact your state senator and ask for their support of Senate Bill 490.

Thank you to all who have worked so hard on the local, state and national level to make a difference in the delivery of oral health care. FDHA is making a difference and I'm proud to be a part of such wonderful change for our profession!!

Betty Dalton, RDH, BS  
Chair, Council on Governmental Affairs