

My journey toward becoming an Affiliated Practice Dental Hygienist (APDH) was based on a desire to improve the oral health of a larger population than that in private practice.

Coincidentally, I was new to the concept of what an APDH was, how it could improve my career, and how it was going to move me closer toward my goals of reaching a larger population.

Luckily, I was hired by [Mountain Park Health Center](#) to be their first APDH. While at a recent AzDHA Impact conference, several hygienists were unfamiliar with what an APDH was and how we differed from a typical Hygienists. According to Summerfelt (2014), a dentist and hygienist establish a legal relationship within a public health setting. Once the APDH is licensed they can digitally obtain and transmit diagnostic data to the affiliated dentist. Furthermore, hygienists need five years of experience or a bachelor's degree and 4 CEs in medical emergencies and 8 CEs total in two of the following to become an APDH: pediatrics, special needs, preventive dentistry or public health community-based dentistry. Currently, I have an affiliated practice agreement with the Dental Director of Mountain Park Health Center, Dr. Angela Relf.

Mountain Park aims to develop a circle of care for patients. They focus on the whole patient by providing integrated care. By having an APDH in the Pediatric Department we are meeting these goals by educating parents on how to properly care for their children's teeth. Dental hygienists are excellent prevention advocates, and I believe having the ability to see children in the Pediatric Department has been a valuable use of my skills. By utilizing the APDH licensing, Mountain Park has developed a very important part of community outreach.

Obtaining my APDH license and working within the Mountain Park clinics has empowered me in a direction I wasn't capable of realizing in private practice. When I obtained my Master's

Degree in Public Health, my desire was to reach a diverse population with a need for resources.

Working here I realized that Mountain Park is an advocate of oral health and overall wellness. By working in a community health setting, this has given me the opportunity to grow and help the community we serve.

Tamara D. Baca, BSDH, MPH, APDH

References

Summerfelt, F. F. (2014). Teledentistry-Assisted Affiliated Practice Dental Hygiene. *Health Informatics, 75*(6), 43-52. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-08973-7_5