

## HB 2058: A Bill to Increase Dental Hygienists' Scope of Practice

HB 2058, sponsored by Representative Nancy Barto on our behalf, makes two (2) important changes to our scope of practice. First, it allows dental hygienists to practice under the general supervision of a physician in an in-patient hospital setting. New and exciting service delivery models are being developed that integrate dental hygienists into hospital settings in order to attend to the daily oral care needs of critically ill or intubated patients. This care can reduce the risk of potentially fatal hospital-acquired infections. Medical billing codes currently exist for implementation of these important oral hygiene services in hospitals but when delivered by dental hygienists – the oral hygiene experts – these medical codes cannot be used unless dental hygienists are supervised by a physician. This bill eliminates that barrier and supports efforts to integrate dental and medical care. Second, it allows affiliated practice dental hygienists (APDH) to supervise dental assistants consistent with the terms of their affiliated practice agreements. Allowing APDHs to supervise dental assistants will improve the quality and efficiency of care delivered by APDHs enabling them to serve more patients and continue to improve access to oral health care for Arizona's underserved population. It is worth noting that at least fifteen (15) other states – including all of Arizona's neighboring states – allow dental hygienists to supervise dental assistants. HB 2058 has received considerable bipartisan support throughout its legislative journey. It currently awaits its final step (3rd read) before being sent to the governor which we expect to happen any day now. Once signed by the governor, it will take effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns.

## SB 1088: Dental Benefit for Pregnant Women on AHCCCS – 3rd Times a Charm?

Over the past several years, the AzDHA has been working with a broad coalition of organizations, including the Arizona Dental Association, to establish a comprehensive adult dental benefit for all Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) beneficiaries. As you probably know, AHCCCS is our state's Medicaid program. We have been successful in reinstating benefits that were lost during the economic downturn of 2008. Those included coverage for the disabled and long-term care populations and the emergency dental care benefit for all adults. Now we are pursuing a NEW benefit that will cover adult women who are pregnant. As dental hygienists, we are well aware of the benefits of making access to oral health care more affordable for this population. The bill is sponsored by Senator Heather Carter and has served its purpose – to garner support to fund this benefit in the budget. The Legislature is now engaging in those budget negotiations.