



TRAIN

State-Supported Scholarships for Dental Assistant Training



ORGANIZATION

**FAMILY HEALTH CENTER
OF MARSHFIELD, INC.**

LOCATION

**MARSHFIELD,
WISCONSIN**

PATIENT

VOLUME (2022)
46,649

STATE POLICY LEVER

State grant funding for DA tuition support

SUCCESS FACTORS

- Partnership with local technical college for grant writing and training delivery
- Scholarship terms crafted to prioritize students who agree to work in an underserved area for at least one year

POSITIVE OUTCOMES:

- Expanding training opportunities and skill development in the community
- Reduced costs for training

THE CHALLENGE

Barriers to recruitment and retention of dental assistants (DA) at the Family Health Center of Marshfield (Family Health Center) include 1) cost and 2) access to DA training.

STATE POLICY/STRATEGY

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) provided grant funding to support tuition scholarships for DA students that complete training through a partnership between a health center and local technical college. The Family Health Center serves as a host site for a DA training program operated by Mid-State Technical College (MSTC). In 2023, DHS awarded a \$160,000 Allied Health Professions grant to Family Health Center for DA student tuition scholarships. The Family Health Center and MSTC provided 100% matching funds for an overall budget of \$320,000, including tuition for scholarships. The success of this grant helped pave the path for a legislative appropriation in the following legislative session (2024) of \$20 million to support oral health workforce training at Wisconsin's technical colleges.

STATE POLICY/STRATEGY IN ACTION

Family Health Center and MSTC partnered to increase local DA training capacity. MSTC provides faculty to run the DA training program and Family Health Center provides space and clinical experience opportunities. Tuition scholarships provided by the DHS grant and matching funds are used to recruit students into the DA program. These scholarships are in place for students that commit to employment in a federally qualified health center (FQHC) or rural health clinic for at least one year upon completion of the program. DHS grant funds are administered to Family Health Center who then

pays MSTC to train the students who agree to tuition scholarship conditions.

To support implementation, Family Health Center's Senior Assistant Manager and the Clinical Training Manager contribute a portion of their time to assist the faculty in the clinical training needs of the students. Family Health Center's information technology staff provide access to the college's student version of electronic dental software and online learning. MSTC provides the general, comprehensive academic support required for training.

THE IMPACT

Family Health Center leadership sees this initiative as both supporting training opportunities and skill development for people in their local community and for recruiting DA staff.



PHOTO: DA STUDENT IN DENTAL MATERIALS CLASS | SOURCE: MID-STATE TECHNICAL COLLEGE, MARSHFIELD CAMPUS

The program has a capacity of eight students per session. This first pilot cohort had six students enrolled, five of which completed the program. A full roster of eight students is expected in the next class cohort. Family Health Center aims to retain at least 80% of tuition scholarship awardees in community health/safety net dental clinics in Wisconsin after graduation. An evaluation plan is in place to monitor outcomes.

Implementation of this training partnership has not had a negative impact on dental clinic productivity. In fact, students provide support to clinical service delivery teams during clinical rotations.

“What started out as brainstorming for workforce shortages, has resulted in collaboration and eagerness to find solutions.”

In this program, the students are immersed in a setting that offers the classroom and clinical experience, located in the center of a community health center with devoted, caring dental professionals to model after.

As this program moves forward, we are excited to see the continued successes it offers in development of skilled, trained, professional healthcare workers eager to care for patients in rural areas.”

TENA SPRINGER, DIRECTOR OF DENTAL OPERATIONS