

Health Resource Shortage Areas for General Dental Care Providers

Dental providers include general practice dentists (D.D.S. and D.M.D.). Data was derived through the analysis of the 2003 surveys of dental providers for general dentists in all 95 counties of the state by the Tennessee Department of Health, Division of Health Access. Licensure data available from the Bureau of Health Licensure and Regulation, Tennessee Department of Health, and distributed by the Office of Health Statistics was used.

Between January and July 2003, dentists were surveyed through a cooperative agreement between the Tennessee Department of Health and the University of Tennessee Community Health Research Group in Knoxville. Mail and phone surveys were performed by the Community Health Research Group and the Tennessee Department of Health staff.

The full-time equivalency calculation of each provider was based on the number of self-reported hours a provider is in direct patient care per week, the age of the dentist, and the total number of dental auxiliaries (dental hygienists and dental assistants). Dental auxiliaries as reported by the dentist were used in the calculation for provider to population ratio. A standard 40-hour workweek in direct patient care is considered the equivalent of one full-time provider. Those reporting over 40 hours a week were counted as no greater than 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE). However, the number of auxiliaries that a dentist utilizes is factored in the equation, therefore, a provider could be counted as greater than one FTE. The actual data were age-adjusted according to the Code of Federal Regulations regarding health professional shortage areas. Dentists' ages were obtained from the surveys and Tennessee Department of Health manpower licensure data. Adjustments for non-responders were made based on guidelines used by the Division of Shortage Designation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This analysis resulted in the designation of the top 30 counties that were reported to have the least access to dentists. Three counties were found to have no provider for general dentistry. A map showing the distribution of providers is on the next page, followed by a map of health resource shortage areas for general dental care providers.