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Dental Therapists are improving oral health equity and access in areas where they are currently practicing. Creating a dental therapy program that can utilize some of the overlapping coursework required in other oral health programs such as dental hygiene will be essential to keep educational costs down.

An educational program that builds upon the same accreditation standards that overlap with an CODA (Commission on Dental Accreditation) accredited dental hygiene program will also be important for establishing a career laddering curriculum. In addition, a program that can offer advanced standing for dental hygienists and or dental assistants will facilitate an expansion of services for patients who already receive oral health care at the dental hygiene school and allow some of the clinical education to be delivered at community-based sites such as federally qualified health centers. If appropriately structured, this type of career laddering curriculum will also cut down on the time it would take for a dental hygienist to complete a dental therapy training program. This will require a strong relationship between the sponsoring institution and the existing dental hygiene program collaborating with the dental therapy program.

Establishing a dental therapy curriculum in Maine will address oral health access by supplying oral health professionals who are educated and prepared to meet these disparities.

Sincerely,
Dr. Cheyanne E. Warren DDS, MS