



# A·D·O·H·T·A

## **\*\*Job Name\*\***

**Oral Health Therapist** (combined dental therapist and dental hygienist)

## **\*\*Lead Statement and Task descriptions\*\***

Oral Health Therapists (combined dental therapists and hygienists) are registered oral health practitioners who provide primary oral health care for children and adults. This includes examining and diagnosing dental decay and gum diseases and providing routine dental treatments. They also work to promote oral health and provide preventive dental services among individuals and the broader community.

Oral health therapists perform the following tasks as part of their work:

- Provide routine clinical dental treatment for children, adolescents and young adults including dental examinations and diagnosis, cleaning, scaling and polishing teeth, filling cavities and extracting teeth under local anaesthetic
- Treat gum conditions for all ages including adults, take X-rays of teeth and jaws, apply sealants and remineralising therapies, and take impressions
- Educate and motivate people to maintain good oral health
- Promote oral health for the community by providing education and information on oral health, work with other health services and groups such as parents' groups, play groups and parents and citizens' associations to improve oral health.
- Bring more complex dental problems to the attention of dentists, specialists or other health care providers
- Advise managers of school canteens about healthy food, work to improve oral health with childcare and elderly residential care settings and other settings that support health, especially those that work with people who do not have good access to dental care.
- Liaise with other health care providers to support oral health as part of general health.

Oral Health therapists who work in the public sector may be required to work anywhere in their state or territory. Individual preferences and applications for specific positions are taken into account however.

## **\*\*Personal Requirements\*\***

- an interest in health and well being
- good hand-eye coordination
- able to do precise and detailed work
- good communication skills
- able to establish rapport with children and adults
- able to work as part of a team.

## **\*\*Related Jobs\*\***

- Dentist
- Dental Assistant
- Dental Technician
- Dental Therapist
- Dental Hygienist
- Dental Prosthetist

### **\*\*Education and Training\*\***

To become an oral health therapist you have to study oral health therapy (Bachelor of Oral Health) at university. To get into the courses you need to gain your VCE/HSC/ACT Year 12 and apply through the University admissions scheme in your state. Prerequisite subjects, or assumed knowledge, in one or more of English, Biology and Chemistry are normally required. Some courses also require Health and Human Development. Entry is highly competitive, and you may need to sit selection tests and attend an interview. Some universities require you to sit the UMAT. Contact the universities for more information as requirements may change.

Supplementary courses exist at some universities to enable dental therapists or dental hygienists to add the necessary skills to become an oral health therapist.

### **\*\*Additional Information\*\***

Oral Health Therapists must be registered with the Dental Board of Australia before they can practice.

### **\*\*Employment Opportunities\*\***

Oral Health Therapists may be employed by any clinic that provides dental services to the public, in both the private sector (general and specialist practices) and the public sector e.g. school and community dental services, hospitals, disability and residential care settings. There are many opportunities in Australia for work as there are currently shortages in the dental workforce. Government dental services are the major employers of oral health therapists although they may also own their own practices.

Opportunities for career progression include positions in research and teaching, and senior clinical and administrative positions coordinating health promotion activities in dental health services state- or territory-wide.