

# Mid-level Dental Providers in California: A Lost Opportunity to Improve Access to Dental Care in the San Joaquin Valley

More than 56M people in the U.S. live in areas with a shortage in dentists

Mid-level dental providers would increase the number of points of access to dental care, especially for the underserved populations

Registered Dental Hygienists in Alternative Practice (RDHAP) is the mid-level dental provider model authorized to practice in the state of California



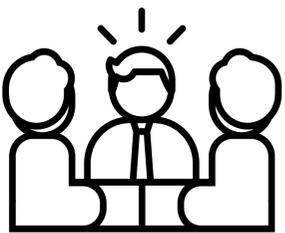
CVHPI conducted 5 focus groups to gauge the level of awareness and perception about the RDHAP model among those groups: parents of children with special health needs, American Indian population, older adults, and residents of rural areas in the Fresno County.



## Unawareness

"This is the first time that I hear of this."

- There was a general unawareness about the existence of the RDHAP model among the public



## Concerns

"How do payments for home visit work? Does the client get charged?"  
"There are not enough of RDHAP in the area..in the Central Valley there are not enough people doing it."

- Lack of awareness of resources to verify information about the RDHAP to invite them to their home
- Concern about their capacity to provide quality dental services
- No awareness about the model among the medical professionals for referral or recommendation
- The scarcity of the RDHAP in the SJV
- Lack of awareness of the entity that oversees their work and their compliance with the infection control measures.
- The need to know the estimated cost of the provided services



## Advantages

"Convenient, you can take advantage of it because it is mobile."  
"It is convenient for my son to be in an environment where he can have that service at home."

- Provide dental services at the convenience of the patient's location
- RDHAP received extensive training and experience
- They use mobile equipment
- Patients with special health needs, older adults, and residents of rural areas need the RDHAP services



## Improvement

"If somebody came to the Senior Center once every two or three months to do screenings, people will come if they know it...I know my friends will come."

Many participants suggested the following to improve the model

- To raise awareness about this profession among medical providers
- To ensure the collaboration between existing entities and programs to facilitate connecting RDHAP to patients that may need their services
- To be more transparent about the cost of their services
- To offer information about this model for high school students to consider it as a health career option

This work was supported by a fund received from DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement.