

# Coalition Building & Advocacy in Wisconsin

Presented By: Candice Skenandore  
Self-Governance Coordinator,  
Oneida Nation



# Agenda

- Why Dental Therapy
- Oral Challenges in Indian Country
- Oral Challenges in Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Tribal Dental Therapy Initiative
- Wisconsin Tribal Dental Health Data
- Oral Challenges facing Wisconsin Tribes
- Advocacy



# Why Dental Therapy



# Why Dental Therapy

- Discovered a need for better access to dental care in the Community
- National Indian Health Board Dental Therapy Initiative
- Monthly Dental Therapy Conference Calls and expanded understanding of Dental Therapy

## Oneida Nation

Post Office Box 365

Phone: (920) 869-2214



Oneida, WI 54155

### BC Resolution # 02-27-19-C

#### Supporting Dental Therapy as a Solution to the Oneida Nation's Oral Health Challenges

- WHEREAS,** the Oneida Nation is a federally recognized Indian government and a treaty tribe recognized by the laws of the United States of America; and
- WHEREAS,** the Oneida General Tribal Council is the governing body of the Oneida Nation; and
- WHEREAS,** the Oneida Business Committee has been delegated the authority of Article IV, Section 1, of the Oneida Tribal Constitution by the Oneida General Tribal Council; and
- WHEREAS,** there is a present high unmet need for dental care, particularly within the American Indian/Alaska Native population, due in part to the lack of enough dentists available to serve Tribal reservations and the off-reservation American Indian/Alaskan Native populations; and
- WHEREAS,** American Indians and Alaska Natives have a higher prevalence of dental decay and untreated tooth decay in all age groups compared to the general United States population, with many Native children experiencing dental caries before the age of two; and
- WHEREAS,** poor oral health issues persist disproportionately for the American Indian/Alaskan Native population such as:
- Over eighty percent (80%) of American Indian/Alaskan Native children aged 2-4 years have dental caries;
  - Eighty-three percent (83%) of American Indian/Alaskan Native children between 6-9 years of age had a history of decay in their primary or permanent teeth, compared to forty-five percent (45%) of children in the general U.S. population;
  - Almost half of 6-9 year-old American Indian/Alaskan Native children, forty-seven percent (47%), had untreated decay. This compares to seventeen percent (17%) of 6-9 year-old children in the general U.S. population;
  - Despite a trend toward a reduction in tooth loss in the U.S. population, older data indicate twenty-five percent (25%) of American Indian/Alaskan Native people aged 35 to 44 years have fewer than twenty (20) natural teeth;
  - Among all persons aged 55 years and older, nearly seventy-five (75%) have fewer than twenty (20) natural teeth;
  - Fifty-nine percent (59%) of American Indian/Alaskan Native adults have periodontal (gum) disease;
  - Seventy-eight percent (75%) American Indian/Alaskan Native adults 35 to 44 years and ninety-eight percent (98%) of elders 55 or older have at least one tooth removed because of decay, trauma, or gum disease; and
- WHEREAS,** these disparities can be attributed to a lack of enough dental health professionals in the Indian health system in which Indian Health Service (IHS) dental providers have a patient load of 2,800 patients per provider, while general population providers have approximately 1,500 patients per provider and the IHS experiences a very high dental provider vacancy

# Why Dental Therapy

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Supporting Dental Therapy as a Solution to the Oneida Nation's Oral Health Challenges  
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rate, with estimates that twenty-six percent (26%) of the dental positions within the IHS are vacant, which contributes to the lack of access to dental health services; and

**WHEREAS,** at Oneida Dental, patient wait times for hygienist are typically around 6-7 months, while wait times for dentists are approximately 4-5 months; and

**WHEREAS,** the IHS has a benchmark of 1200 users per dentist above an initial 800 user population and Oneida Dental has a user population of 28,148, which equates to 6,077 users per dentist. The patient-to-dentist ratio is five times greater than IHS standards; and

**WHEREAS,** in treaties, health care was guaranteed by the federal government in perpetuity in exchange for Tribal land and peace; and

**WHEREAS,** poor dental care is often a life sentence to poverty, as it is accompanied with a decline in self-confidence and often a loss of academic and economic opportunities due to social perceptions of poor dental hygiene, contributing to cyclical generational impoverishment in Indian Country; and

**WHEREAS,** Dental Therapists have been in existence in Alaska Native communities since 2004 and thoroughly evaluated for safety, quality, and appropriate scope of practice with the Alaska Native patient population in collaboration with the IHS; and

**WHEREAS,** Dental Therapists work as part of the dental team under the supervision of dentists and have received high results and accolades from patients, health care professionals, and community leaders in the U.S. and in over fifty (50) other countries; and

**WHEREAS,** Although IHS, which fulfills the treaty obligation to provide health services to Tribes, is a federal agency, current federal law states that IHS can only utilize dental therapists working under the Community Health Aid Program (CHAP) if a state legislature agrees; and

**WHEREAS,** Wisconsin passing legislation to allow for the hiring of Dental Health Aide Therapists would permit federal U.S. Indian Health Service funding to be used by Tribes to utilize Dental Therapists as part of the dental team; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Oneida Business Committee supports legislation authorizing Dental Therapists in Wisconsin to empower Tribes and the Indian Health Service to provide desperately needed dental care to our communities.

#### CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned, as Secretary of the Oneida Business Committee, hereby certify that the Oneida Business Committee is composed of 9 members of whom 5 members constitute a quorum; 7 members were present at a meeting duly called, noticed and held on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2019; that the forgoing resolution was duly adopted at such meeting by a vote of 6 members for, 0 members against, and 0 members not voting; and that said resolution has not been rescinded or amended in any way.

  
Lisa Summers, Secretary  
Oneida Business Committee

\*According to the By-Laws, Article I, Section 1, the Chair votes "only in the case of a tie."

- Oneida Nation supports Dental Therapy
- Discovered Oneida's oral challenges
- Wait times at Oneida are about 6-7 months
- Patient visits-to-dentist ratio is over five times higher than IHS standards

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# Oral Challenges in Indian Country



# Oral Challenges in Indian Country

- 71.3% of American Indian/Alaskan Native children aged 3-5 have tooth decay.
- 86% of American Indian/Alaskan Native children between 6-9 year of age had a history of decay in their primary permanent teeth, compared to 56% of children in the general US population.
- 47% of 6-9-year-old American Indian/Alaskan Native children had untreated decay compared to 17% of 6-9-year-old children in the general US population.

# Oral Challenges in Indian Country

- American Indian/Alaskan Native adult dental patients suffer disproportionately higher rates of untreated tooth decay, with twice the prevalence as the general US population and more than any other racial/ethnic group.
- About 83% of American Indian/Alaskan Native adult patients aged 40-64 years have lost at least one permanent tooth compared to 66% of the general US population of the same age.

# Oral Challenges in Wisconsin



# Oral Challenges in Wisconsin

- Wisconsin ranks near the bottom in access to dental care for low income children
- Dental Therapy will increase access to dental care for underserved areas in Wisconsin
- There are 1.2 million residents who live in dental shortage areas
- 64 of the 72 counties face dental shortages
- 1 million residents rely on Medicaid for dental benefits, only 37% of dentists in WI accept Medicaid patients
- WI ranks 45<sup>th</sup> of all states in the number of Medicaid children who saw a dentist in 2017

# Oral Challenges in Wisconsin

- Wisconsin has 8 CODA accredited dental hygiene schools
- In 2015, hospitals in Wisconsin reported that over 41,000 emergency room visits could have been prevented with proper dental care which resulted in nearly \$25 million in hospital charges



# Wisconsin Tribal Dental Therapy Initiative



# Wisconsin Tribal Dental Therapy Initiative



Oneida Nation  
Oneida Business Committee  
PO Box 365 • Oneida, WI 54951-0365  
oneidanation.gov



June 10, 2019

**Re: Dental Health Therapy in Wisconsin**

Dear Chairperson, Elected Leader, Tribal Health Director, Dental Health Advocate:

On March 28, 2019, the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC) met in Oneida to discuss, among other things, an initiative to seek Dental Health Therapy in Wisconsin. GLITC directed that a letter be sent to Wisconsin Tribal leaders, Health Directors, and/or Dental Health Advocates to 1) supply an explanation of Dental Therapy, 2) identify oral challenges in Indian Country and Wisconsin, 3) summarize proposed Wisconsin Legislation, 4) create a Tribal Dental Health Coalition, and 5) solicit data from the Wisconsin tribes regarding oral health and dental wait times.

**Dental Therapy**

Dental Therapists are licensed primary mid-level oral health professionals who work in conjunction with a dental team under the supervision of a dentist. Dental Therapists supply basic clinical dental treatment which focuses on routine and preventative services such as diagnosis and treatment planning, prevention, basic hygiene, radiographs, infection controls, pediatric care, fillings, urgent care, extractions, community outreach and education, clinic management, equipment repairs and maintenance, and more. Because Dental Therapists are able to provide these routine dental procedures, Dentists can focus on the more challenging cases.

Dental Therapy started in Alaska when in 2004 the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium introduced the first successful dental therapist workforce. Since then, nine other states have authorized dental health therapy including Minnesota and Michigan. Washington State has authorized a tribal dental therapy pilot project. Ten other states are considering authorizing dental therapy, including the State of Wisconsin.

**Oral Challenges and Wisconsin Proposed Legislation**

**Oral Challenges in Indian Country**

- According to the National Indian Health Board Tribal Oral Health Initiative, over 58% of American Indian and Alaska Native children suffer from dental decay by the age of 8, compared to 50% for the same age group for the rest of the population.
- American Indian and Alaska Native children ages 2-5, on average, have six decayed teeth, compared to one decayed tooth for all other children in the same age group.
- According to a 1999 Oral Health Survey of American Indian and Alaska Native Dental Patients, nationwide, there is typically one dentist for every 1,500 people. In Indian Country, one dentist averages 2,800 patients. At Oneida Nation, we have approximately 6,000 patients per dentist.

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- Most Americans can see a local dentist within a week; however, based on a 2018 assessment conducted by the National Indian Health Board on wait times in Indian Country, 61% of respondents said the average wait time for a dental appointment is between 1-3 months; 5% of respondents noted wait times of greater than six months; and 22% identified a wait time of less than a month. The Oneida Nation has wait times that range from 4-8 months.

**Oral Challenges in Wisconsin**

- Wisconsin rates 45th of all states in the number of Medicaid children who saw a dentist in 2017.
- Dental Therapy will increase access to dental care for underserved areas in Wisconsin.
- Wisconsin has 1.2 million residents who live in dental shortage areas.
- 64 of the 72 counties in Wisconsin face dental shortages.
- 1 million Wisconsin residents rely on Medicaid for dental benefits yet only 37% of dentists in Wisconsin accept Medicaid patients.
- Wisconsin has eight CODA-accredited dental hygiene schools which means there is already an educational infrastructure to explore training programs in our state.
- In Wisconsin more than 41,000 emergency room visits for preventable dental conditions were reported by hospitals in 2015. This represents nearly \$25 million in hospital charges.

**Wisconsin Proposed Legislation**

2019 Senate Bill 89 and Assembly Bill 81 were introduced as companion bills. SB-89 was referred to the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services on March 7, 2019 by Sen. David Craig (R-28). AB-81 was referred to the Assembly Committee on Medicaid Reform and Oversight on March 18, 2019.

**The bills will:**

- Establish the licensing process for dental therapists in the state of Wisconsin.
- Allow licensed dental therapists to practice under a dentist as part of an oral healthcare delivery team.
- Enumerate the services a dental therapist can perform, including administering anesthesia.
- Allow dentists to require stricter supervision or more limited scope of practice within the Collaborative Management Agreement.
- Require 12 hours of Continuing Education every two years for a dental therapist's license to be renewed.
- Allow dental therapists to receive student loan assistance from the state, provided they practice 32 hours per week for three years in rural areas or eligible practice areas, which include Tribal lands and dental shortage areas.
- Allow dental therapists to supervise dental hygienists.
- Allow dentists to employ up to five dental therapists at any given time.
- Add two dental therapists to the state's Board of Dentistry.

**Wisconsin Tribal Dental Health Coalition**

The Oneida Nation has partnered with the National Indian Health Board to lead the initiative to seek dental health therapy in Wisconsin. In speaking with GLITC it was decided that a coalition comprised of Tribal leaders, Health Directors and/or Dental Specialists be formed to advocate for dental health therapy in Wisconsin as well as educate the State Legislature on oral challenges Wisconsin tribes face. This coalition will hold face-to-face meetings with key legislators as well

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as actively participate in the Wisconsin Dental Health Coalition for the purpose of providing the tribal perspective of oral health challenges. I ask that you consider participating in the Wisconsin Tribal Dental Health Therapy Coalition.

**Data Collection**

To better prepare for the advocacy work and to paint an accurate picture of the oral challenges Wisconsin tribes face, I humbly request that each tribe fill out the brief survey accompanying this letter. The survey can be accessed by clicking the link included in the email <https://forms.gle/trVdvgCdGhhPiUvP9>. The data collected from the survey will be used to educate the Wisconsin legislature on dental issues facing Wisconsin tribes.

I want to thank you for your time and consideration in participating in seeking Dental Health Therapy in Wisconsin. Please complete the brief survey no later than July 1, 2019. Should you have any questions, please contact Candice Skenandore, Self-Governance Coordinator, Oneida Nation at (920) 869-4281 or by email at [csken10@oneidationation.org](mailto:csken10@oneidationation.org).

Very Respectfully,

Brandon Yellowbird Stevens,  
Oneida Nation Vice Chairman

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**ONEIDA**

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# Wisconsin Tribal Dental Health Data



# Data Collection

## Dental Health Data Request

\* Required

1. Which Tribe do you represent? \*

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2. Which position do you hold? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Elected Official
- Health Director
- Dental Specialist
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Does your tribe provide dental services? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes, full services
- Yes, limited services
- No

4. How many dental clinics do you operate?

*Mark only one oval.*

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4+

5. How many full-time dentists do you employ?

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6. How many part-time dentists do you employ?

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7. How many full-time hygienists do you employ?

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8. How many part-time hygienists do you employ?

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9. How many full-time dental assistants do you employ?

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10. How many part-time dental assistants do you employ?

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11. What other dental staff do you employ and are they full or part-time?

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12. How many dental patients do you serve?

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13. How long, on average, does it take for a patient to see a dentist?

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# Data Collection



14. **What dental health challenges does your tribe face?**  
*Check all that apply.*
- Access to care
  - Long wait times
  - Staff shortages
  - None
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

15. **What are the biggest dental health issues faced by your patients?**

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16. **Please provide any other comments:**

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17. **Would you like to be part of the Tribal Dental Health Coalition?**  
*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

18. **If so, please provide your name and contact information:**

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# Survey Results

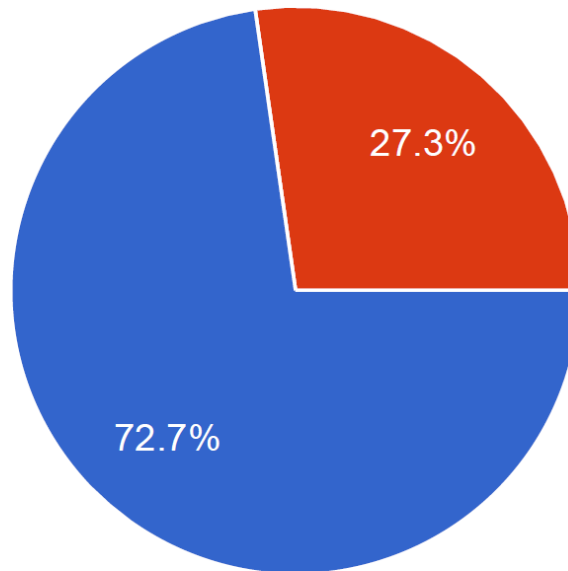
- 11 Responses from 7 different Tribes
- Responses came from Elected Officials, Health Directors/Staff, Dental Directors/Specialists, Epidemiologist
- 81.8% operate one dental clinic, 18.2% operate four or more dental clinics

# Survey Results

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1SPOP-tcfHQibcvZsZZFKabf4u1IvDSDuWjB6PIZxQ4/edit#responses>

## Does your tribe provide dental services?

11 responses



- Yes, full services
- Yes, limited services
- No

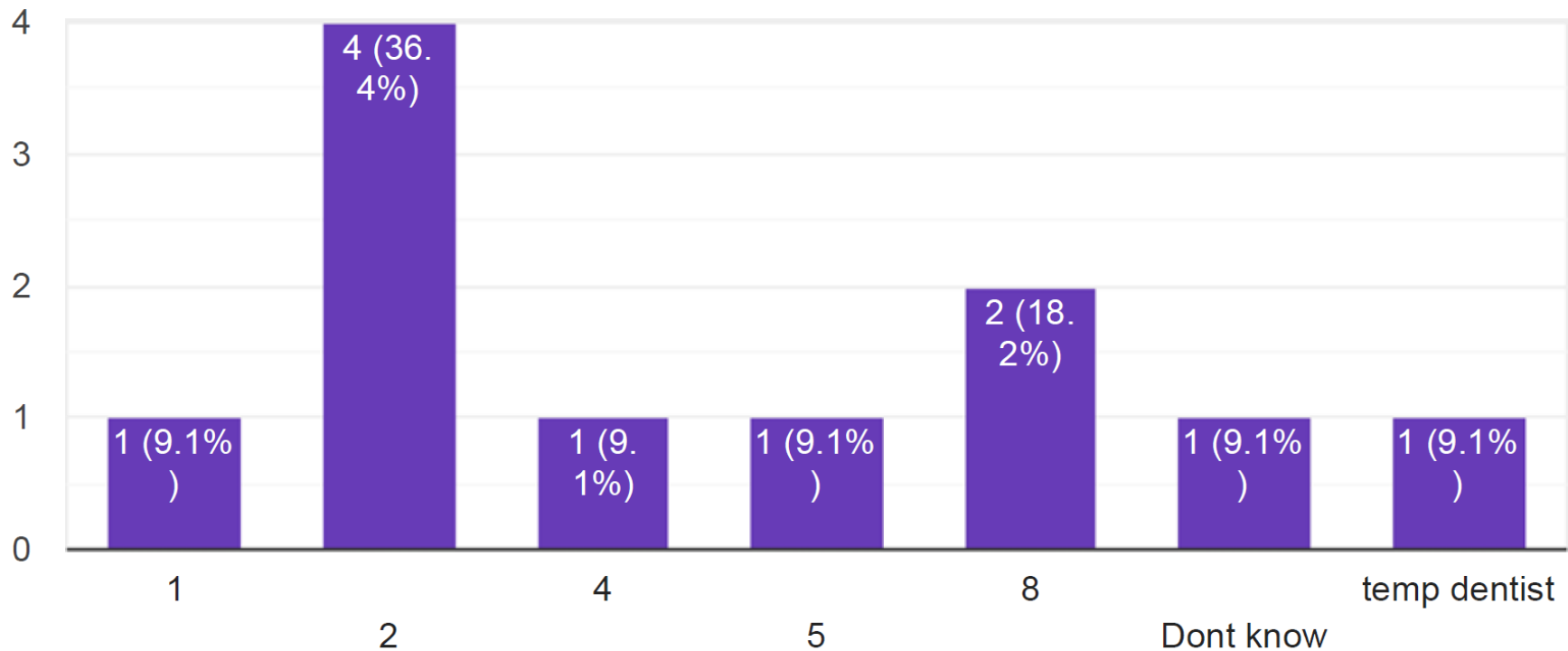
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# Survey Results

## How many full-time dentists do you employ?

11 responses



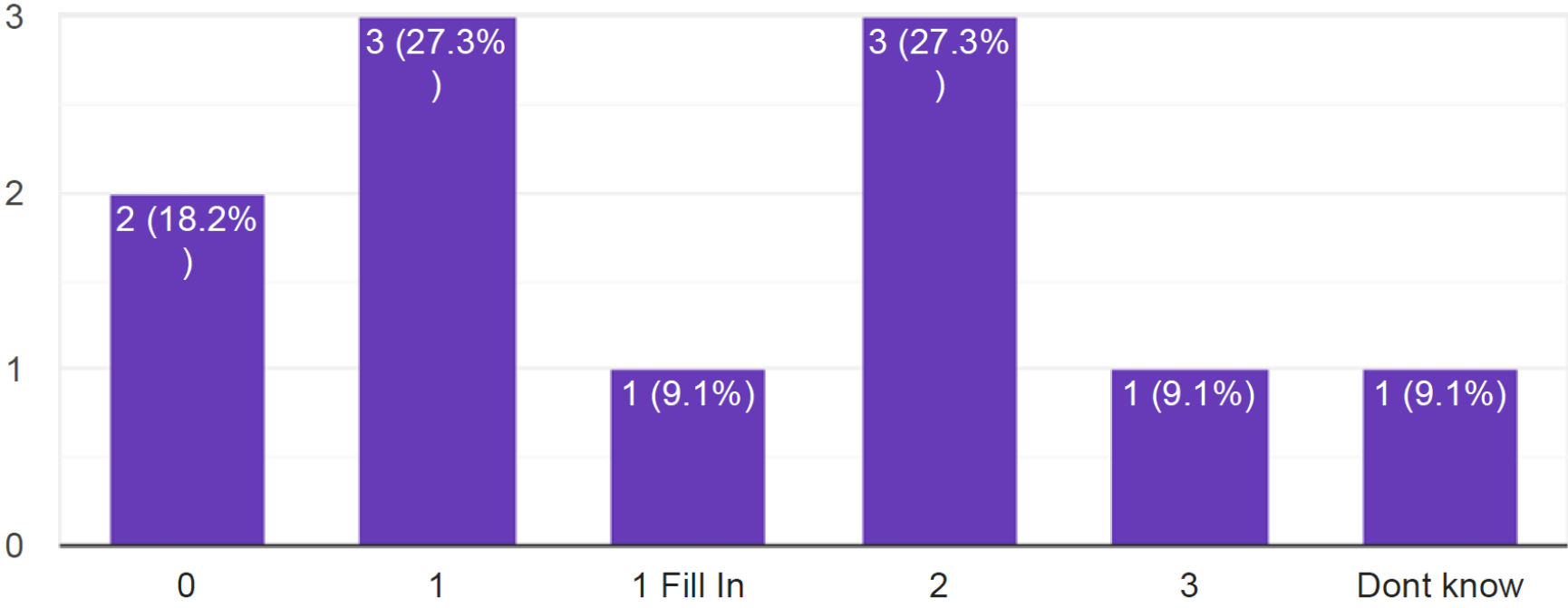
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# Survey Results

## How many part-time dentists do you employ?

11 responses



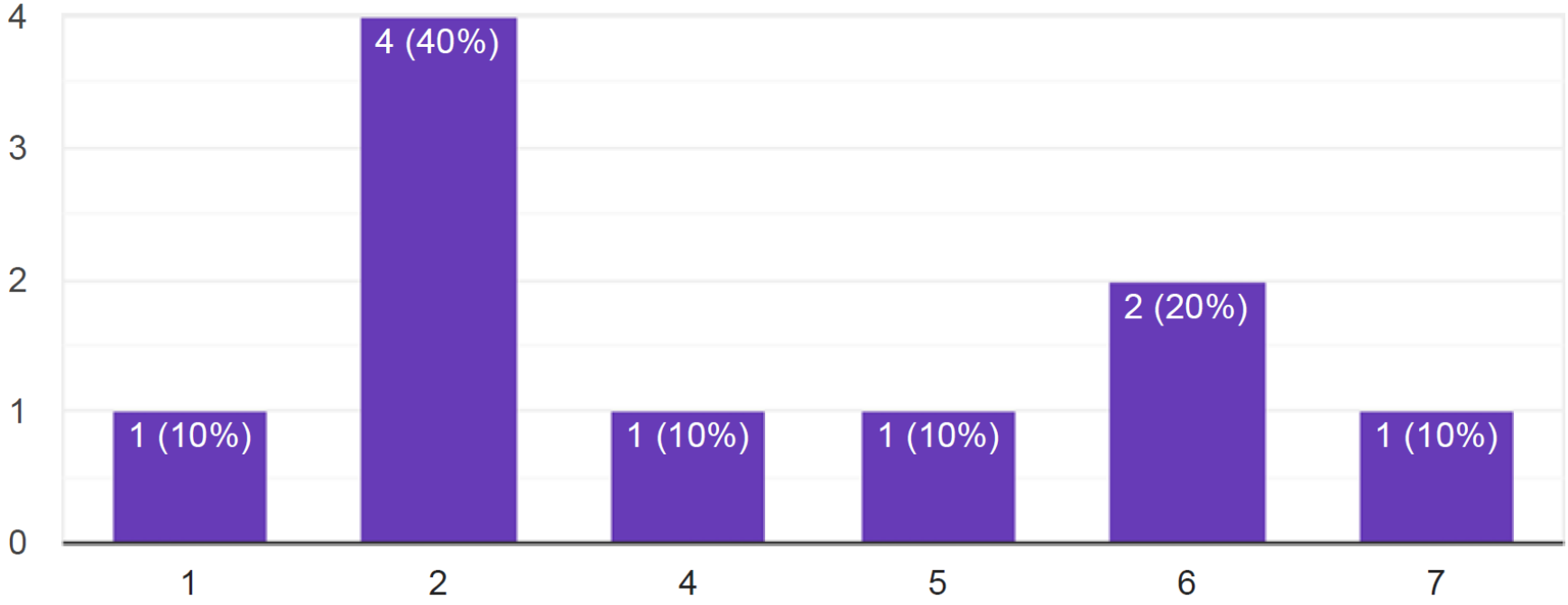
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# Survey Results

## How many full-time hygienists do you employ?

10 responses



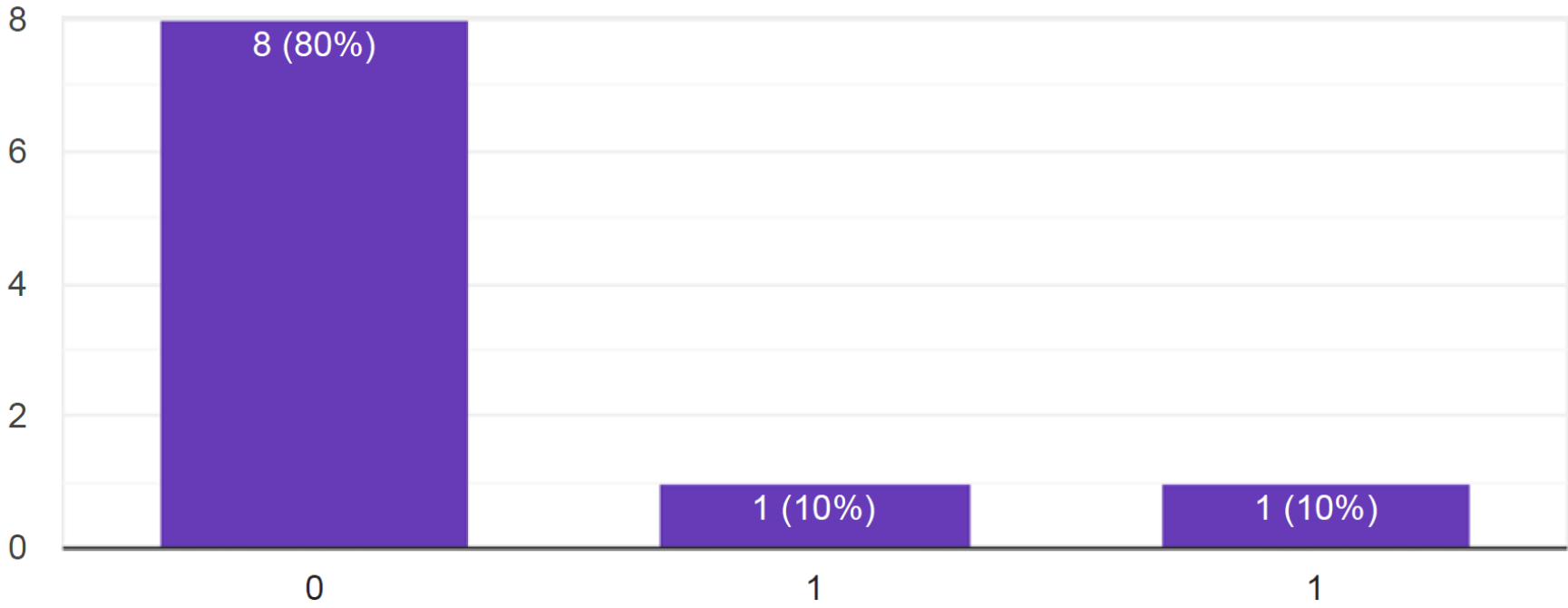
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# Survey Results

## How many part-time hygienists do you employ?

10 responses



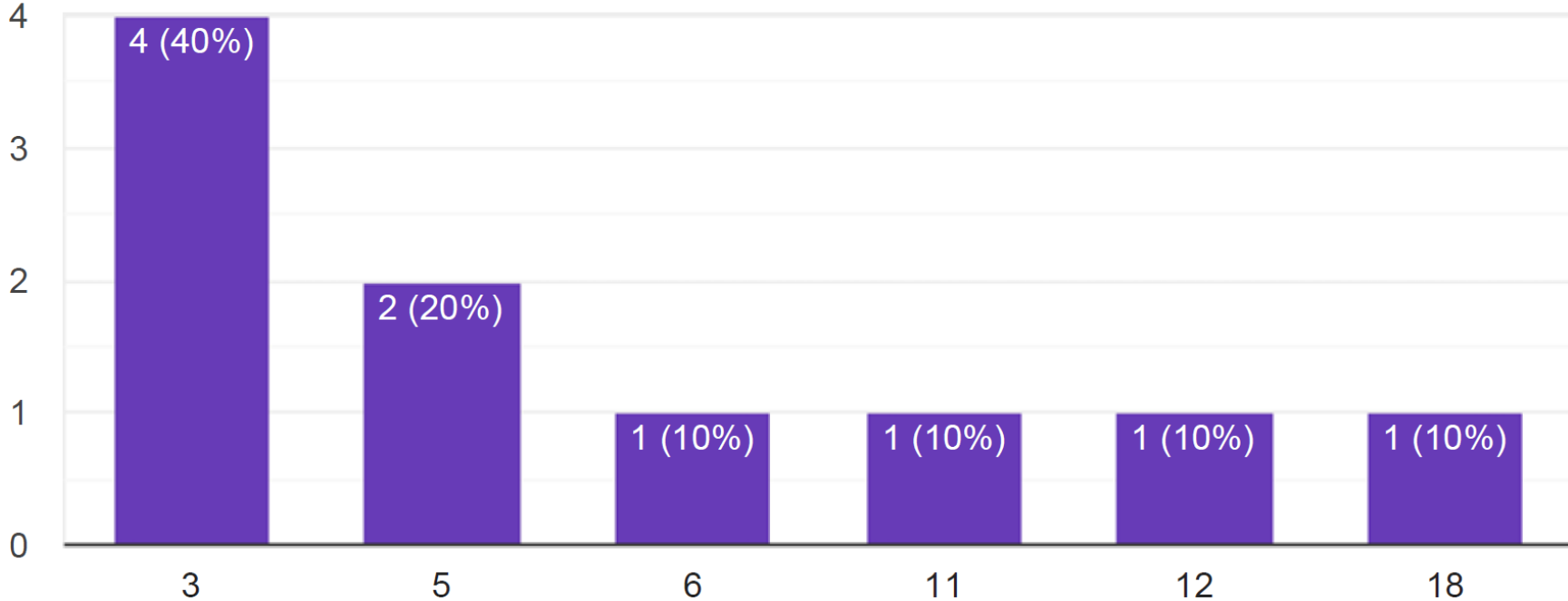
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# Survey Results

## How many full-time dental assistants do you employ?

10 responses



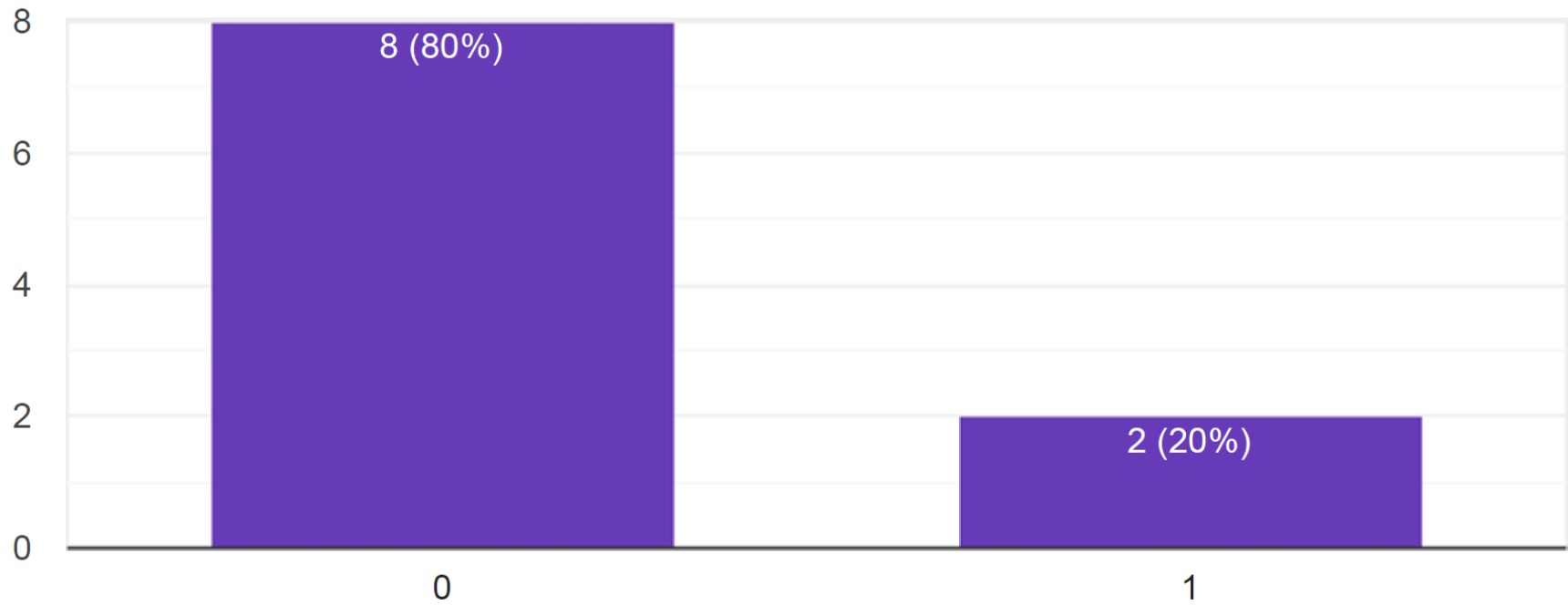
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# Survey Results

## How many part-time dental assistants do you employ?

10 responses



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# Survey Results

## How many dental patients do you serve?

7 responses

- 700
- 5800
- 3700
- 8113
- 3000
- 2000
- 23569

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# Survey Results

How long, on average, does it take for a patient to see a dentist?

9 responses

6-8  
months

1-3  
weeks

4  
weeks

Same  
day to a few months, depending on their situation

<  
2 weeks- we also have daily walk-ins appointments which typically reduces the wait time.

2  
months

3  
months

same  
day for pain 2 months for appt

6-8  
weeks

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# Survey Results: Biggest Dental Health Issues Facing Patients

- Long wait times
- Advanced Periodontist
- Availability of Appointments
- Not participating in Routine and Preventative Maintenance
- Early Childhood tooth decay
- Patient compliance
- Lack of services i.e. braces, dentures, crowns, etc.
- Lack of infrastructure
- Health Issues (diabetes) and dental phobia

Survey Results: Other  
Comment

Hard to find providers  
and support staff who  
want to work and live in  
rural areas

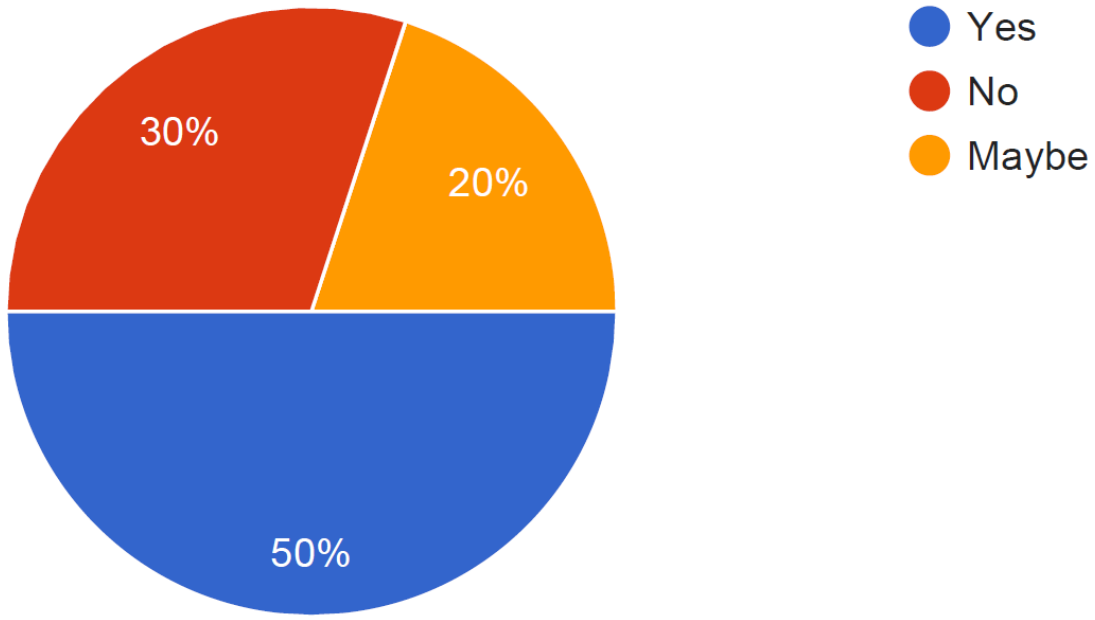
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# Survey Results

## Would you like to be part of the Tribal Dental Health Coalition?

10 responses



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Advocacy



# Advocacy

- Testimony
- Participation in WI Dental Therapy Coalition
- Partnership with NIHB
- Participate in Media Campaign with Co-Sponsors of legislation
- Round Table Discussions with WI Tribes





Candice Skenandore, Self-Governance Coordinator

Oneida Nation

[cskena10@oneidanation.org](mailto:cskena10@oneidanation.org)

(920) 869-4281

