

ISSUE #10: DHCC does not use its authority to support a diversion program.

Background: The DHCC has the statutory authority to provide a Diversion Program to its licensees with substance use issues. While the DHCC is sensitive to the possibility that its licensees may need recovery assistance, the DHCC does not want to be in a position to fund and oversee these efforts. No participants, voluntary or otherwise, have presented themselves since 2014.

Staff Recommendation: *The Committees may wish to remove the requirement for DHCC to establish a diversion program.*

ISSUE #11: DHCC could help spread awareness about screening for domestic abuse.

Background: Initiatives across the country are enlisting healthcare practitioners to identify and assist victims of domestic abuse. As reported in the online news source *STATnews*, one program called P.A.N.D.A., short for “prevent abuse and neglect through dental awareness” has created a course to train dentists and hygienists in detecting abuse and neglect.

The article reports that an estimated 70 percent of injuries from abuse are on the head and neck, which puts hygienists in an ideal position to spot victims. One survey of domestic abuse victims found that over half had visited a dentist when signs of abuse were present, but nearly 90 percent of those individuals weren’t asked about their injuries. The majority said they wished their dentist had asked.³³

The article continues, “Although bruises and other evidence of physical trauma are most obvious, other signs are more subtle -- victims might miss an appointment, or be late. They might be particularly jumpy in the dentist’s chair. Sometimes, a perpetrator won’t leave a victim’s side during the appointment.

‘They present with a lot of anxiety, and they don’t like anything going into their mouths,’ said Dr. Kanchan Ganda, a physician who teaches at the dental school at Tufts and who started the school’s Dental Outreach to Survivors program.”

Hygienists typically spend more time with patients than dentists, and could use this opportunity to assist a patient’s total wellbeing.

This idea has precedence with AB 326 (Salas, Chapter 312, Statutes of 2017), which authorized the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology (BBC) to promote awareness of physical and sexual abuse. This bill also authorized the BBC Health and Safety Advisory Committee to provide advice and recommendations on how to ensure licensees have awareness about physical and sexual abuse their clients may be experiencing.

³³ Megan Thielking, “Dentists are pushed to screen patients for domestic abuse — and offer help.” *STAT news*, May 31, 2017. Available at <https://www.statnews.com/2017/05/31/domestic-abuse-dentists/>

