

April 24, 2020

North Dakota Board of Dental Examiners
PO Box 7246
Bismarck, ND 58507

North Dakota Board of Dental Examiners,

The NDDA Board of Trustees supports the independent clinical judgment of our member dentists to provide dental care specific to their patients and practice. Further, **the NDDA will advocate at the April 27, 2020 NDBODE meeting for the right of all dentists in North Dakota to practice dentistry using their independent clinical judgment specific to their patients and practice.** Further, prior to any member dentist providing any dental care in North Dakota, the NDDA Board of Trustees strongly recommends all member dentists review all American Dental Association COVID-19 Guidance including the “Return to Work Toolkit,” which will be released April 27, 2020.

As the regulatory body charged with the protection of public health and safety regarding the practice of dentistry in North Dakota, the NDDA respects the guidance provided from our NDBODE. We thank them for their guidance not only for our members, but all licensed dental professionals within our state. The NDDA cannot represent any positions taken by NDBODE, but respects their decisions with regards to the regulation of the practice of dentistry in our state.

The NDDA Board of Trustees would like to provide the following comment to clarify our position:

On behalf of the North Dakota Dental Association and our Board of Trustees, we wish to send our most sincere thanks to NDBODE and your staff for your leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NDDA believes in the clinical expertise, education and judgment of our over 400 member dentists across the state of North Dakota and will advocate that any and all practice decisions autonomously flow from our member dentists. All of our member dentists have been thinking, planning and preparing about what will be their “new normal” for providing dental care in our state. **At the NDDA, our number one priority is and always will be the health and safety of our dentists, their staff and most importantly their patients.**

NDDA Membership and dental offices across the state made the difficult, but correct decision, to limit care out of initial precautions due to this pandemic. While the initial limitations were valuable, the majority of dental treatment is now being delayed without any current timeline in which dentists can plan to resume care. **Further delay will cause further harm to patients.** In addition, those in greatest need of dental care are often the same patients with underlying health conditions that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19 complications. **Regular, preventative, and supportive dental care is an important part of maintaining their overall health.** We are substituting one health care crisis for another, resulting in more serious long-term effects.

Dental offices routinely manage the risks of infectious disease transmission and are capable of adapting to these new risks as highly trained experts in dental medicine. Potential encounters at dental offices also present less risk to the community because these contacts are well-documented and easily traced, unlike

the random encounters at grocery stores and takeout restaurants. For the good of the community, we must now take steps to begin providing additional essential dental care.

The NDDA has provided and will continue to provide many “Reopening Dental Offices” resources to our membership for their review if providing care during this COVID-19 pandemic. Membership have already received “ADA Interim PPE Guidelines,” “ADA - What to Do if Someone on Your Staff Tests Positive for COVID-19,” and coming Monday, April 27, 2020 the “ADA Return to Work Toolkit.” **All NDDA member dentists have been strongly recommended to review all upcoming content, presentations, resources and guidance if they are providing any dental care through this pandemic.** Practices are encouraged to research and exceed standard infection control procedures and implement policies to minimize patients’ time and possible contact in the waiting rooms. **If at any point, any dental provider feels it is best to limit or close their practice, the NDDA strongly encourages the dental provider to follow their clinical judgment.**

Through our unified decisions and actions, we have signaled, and Governor Burgum has noticed, the proactive intelligent decisions and preparedness from the dental community to handle this pandemic. Since the beginning of this pandemic the NDDA has been in constant communication and working with the State Health Officer, the North Dakota Board of Dental Examiners, the North Dakota Department of Health the American Dental Association and most importantly Governor Burgum.

As a result of our unified action, the NDDA will strongly advocate for the independent clinical judgment of our member dentists to provide dental care specific to their patients and practice. Further the NDDA will focus on and provide to members the most accurate and up to date health and safety resources when it comes to providing any dental care through this COVID-19 pandemic. **It is our intention that all NDDA members will keep up to date, informed and follow the highest health, safety and infection control standards.**

We are all in this together and want to thank you for your unified voice and effort through these extremely trying times. Dentists across the state continue to do what they feel is best for North Dakota, take care of North Dakota. This is a group of highly trained healthcare professionals who have been willing and ready to follow recommendations put forth on how to best take care of our great state. **We will continue to advise them in a fashion that allows them to be advocates for North Dakota and this great state’s well-being.** We will continue staying up to date on the latest recommendations from the American Dental Association, Governor Burgum and you. We are tasked with using that information to appropriately advise dentists on how to proceed. Again, thank you for all you have done for North Dakota. Like Governor Burgum has said many times, we are in this together. The NDDA’s number one priority at this time is getting dentists back to taking care of North Dakotans. If you have any questions for the NDDA, do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Respectfully,

NDDA Board of Trustees

Dr. Brad Anderson – NDDA President
Dr. Jackie Nord – NDDA President-elect
Dr. Dustin Hollevoet – NDDA Vice President
Dr. Carrie Orn – NDDA Secretary
Dr. David Olson – NDDA Immediate Past President
Dr. Jerry Cook – NDDA Eastern At-Large Trustee
Dr. Maria “Duffy” Meyer – NDDA Western At-Large Trustee