



Supply of Practicing Dentists in Illinois

Overview and Background Facts:

In 1978, Illinois had 8,644 licensed dentists to provide care to an Illinois population of 11,434,000. As of 2004, 9,635 dentists served 12,713,634 Illinois residents.

The number of licensed dentists in Illinois has increased 11.5 % in this 26-year period, while the Illinois population has increased at a slightly lower rate of 11.2%.

In March 2006, Illinois had 9,753 licensed dentists.

According to the 2004 IDPR census, twenty-three percent (23%) of currently licensed dentists graduated from a dental school that is now closed (Northwestern and Loyola).

The two remaining Illinois dental schools graduate about 140 dentists per year. (SIU –50, U of I – 65 and U of I International program – 25).

The Illinois Division of Professional Regulation issued first-time licenses to 373 dentists in 1992, 291 in 1998, 294 in 2000 and 333 in 2002.

Unlike medicine, 80% of dentists are general dentists and, to varying degrees, can perform many types of dental procedures that specialists perform.

Comments:

The two Illinois dental schools produce less than half of the dentists that obtained an Illinois dental license in the last decade. The two closed dental schools have not had a major impact of the supply of dentists in Illinois. Illinois is now considered an importer of dentists.

Increasing the number of dentists due to a lack of dentists practicing in rural areas or participating in the Medicaid program is misguided. This would assume that the additional graduating dentists would choose to practice in rural areas.

The lack of dentists participating in the Medicaid program is not because of an undersupply of dentists in Illinois, but among other things, rather reflects the low level of Medicaid reimbursement rates.

Major increases in practice efficiency and productivity have been made in dentistry over the last few decades. The positive impact that this has had on the dental workforce must be considered when looking at future projection of the supply of dentists.

ISDS Position Statement:

Illinois has a sufficient supply of practicing dentists to meet the oral healthcare needs of its residents and the current trend indicates that this will continue for the near future. There may be a mal-distribution of general dentists and specialists that affect some rural areas, but the majority of Illinois residents live within a reasonable distance, 30 miles or 30 minutes, of a dentist.