



# Oral Health Equity for Tribal Communities

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We're a national organization dedicated to building the power of people to create a health system rooted in race equity and health justice and a society where health is a right for all. Together with partners, we're building a powerful, united movement with a shared vision of and strategy for a health system accountable to all people.

**300+** partner organizations at the local and state level

**45+** states where we do our work

**9 states** where we've incubated health advocacy organizations



# Oral Health in Tribal Communities

- Provider Shortages
  - Difficult to recruit and retain providers
- Lack of access
- High incidences of dental disease
- Low trust in oral health care delivery system





# Dental Therapists: At-a-Glance

## What can they do?

- Exams
- Oral health education
- Filling cavities
- Pulling baby teeth
- Pulling permanent teeth in limited circumstances

## What's their education?

Minimum three academic year dental therapy program (some schools go year-round so it's only two calendar years)



# What Makes Dental Therapy Different?

- Solution that came from Tribal communities, not imposed on them
- Empowers people in communities without good access to dental care to become the providers their community needs
- Attention paid to making education accessible



Conan Murat, DHAT

# Working as a Team

**Dentist:** supervises team, usually works in dental office, does complicated procedures (root canals, crowns...)



**Dental Hygienist:** works in office and community settings, does preventive care (cleanings, sealants...)



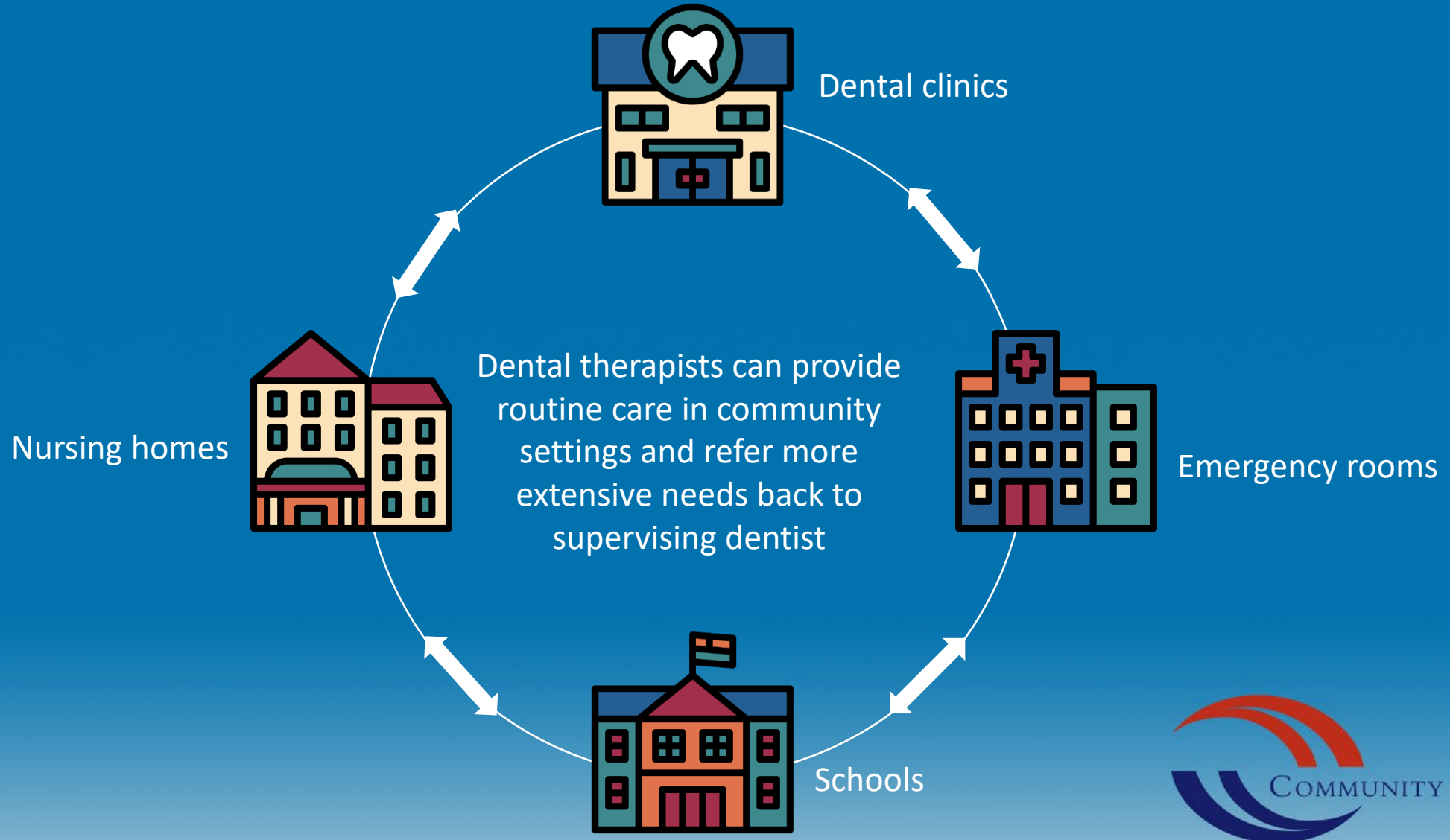
**Dental Therapist:** works in office and community settings, does routine care (exams, fillings...)



**Dental Assistant:** works in office and community settings, assists other providers and does basic procedures services (X-rays, sterilization...)



# Care in the community





# DT's Impact in Indian Country and Beyond

- Tribes that employ dental therapists report:
  - Shorter wait times (from >6 months down to 6 weeks in one case)
  - More preventative care
  - Fewer invasive procedures necessary
  - More revenue coming to dental facility
    - Especially true in Medicaid expansion states
    - Especially true in states with adult dental benefits in Medicaid
- But the most important outcome is...



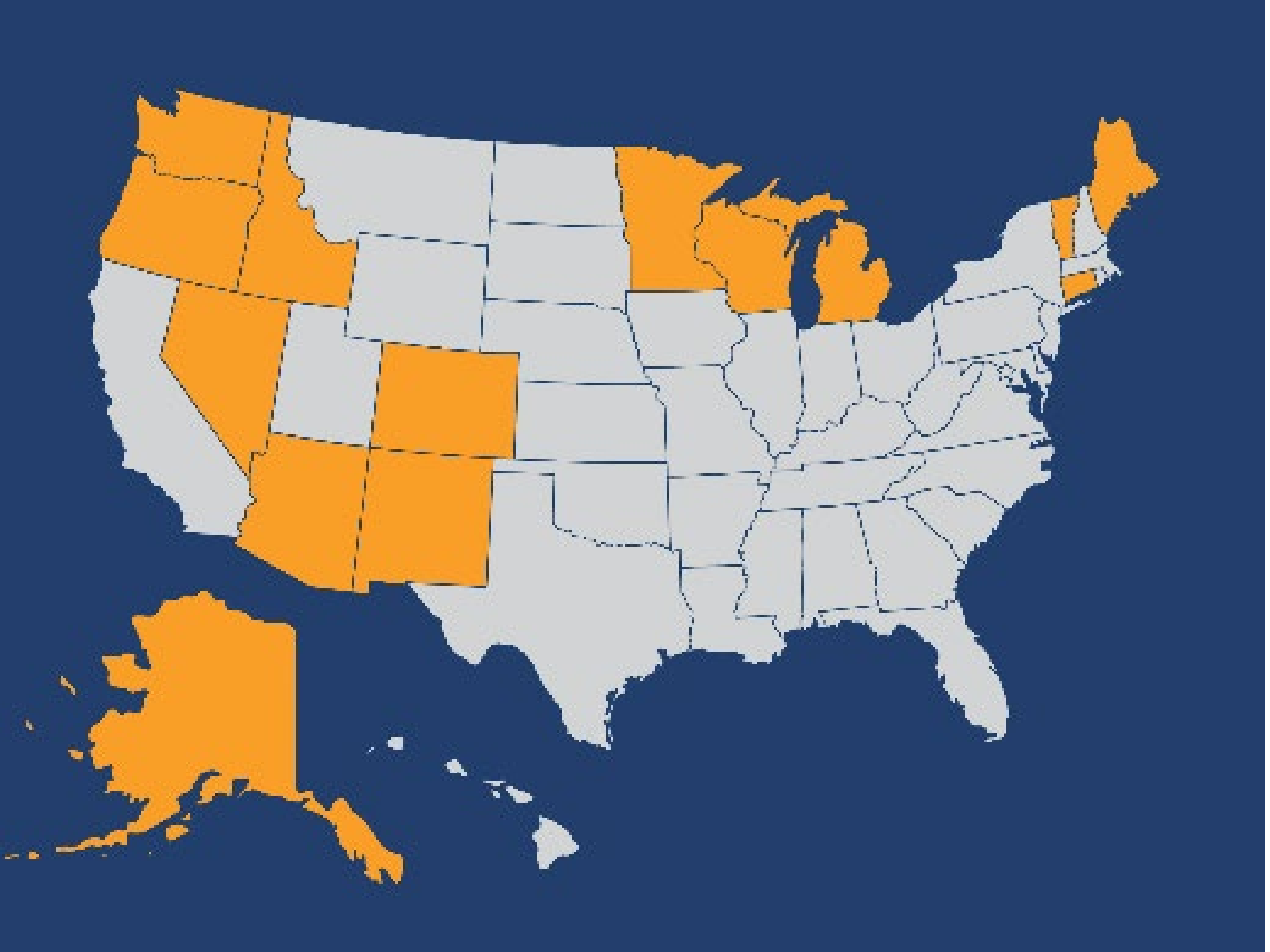




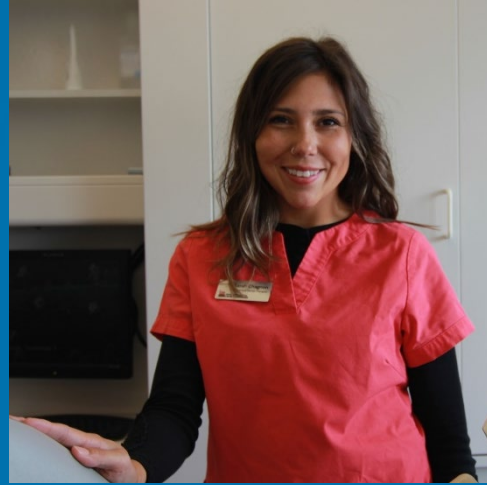
# A Snapshot: Dental Therapy Today

- Currently working in 5 states (AK, ME, MN, OR, WA)
- Authorized in at least some settings in an additional 9 states (AZ, CO, CT, ID, MI, NM, NV, VT, WI)
- Three accredited education programs (AK, WA, & MN) are currently open
- More education programs are in development (MI, MN, WA, & WI)









Real dental therapists from across the country!!!





# Thank you!

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