

**MARKET SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM**

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**Report of the Market Supplement Review  
Committee**

**Dental Therapist  
(Annual Review)**

**Final Report**

**October 15, 2003**

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the Market Supplement Program is to ensure that Saskatchewan health care employers can attract and retain the employees required to provide appropriate health care services to the people of Saskatchewan.

This program is designed to address specific skill shortages by use of a temporary market supplement to attract and/or retain qualified employees. The program is designed to ensure that temporary market supplements respond to valid labour market criteria to address recruitment/retention pressures.

## **OVERVIEW**

The Market Supplement Review Committee reviewed updated documentation submitted in the annual review process regarding the market supplement for Dental Therapists. The initial market supplement report was released by the Market Supplement Review Committee August 6, 2002 and implemented on October 16, 2002. This latest report is to be considered as part of the on-going review of the market supplement process for this classification as described in the HSAS Letters of Understanding. This is the first annual review for the Dental Therapist classification.

There are three Health Regions that employ Dental Therapists in Saskatchewan. Dental Therapists are members of Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan (HSAS). There is an increasing amount of pressure on Dental Therapists working in northern Saskatchewan where there is a young population and high birth rates. The two northern health districts comprise a very large geographic area of the province making service delivery difficult. These conditions have a great impact on recruitment and retention because many Dental Therapists prefer to work in an area where extreme travel conditions are not so adverse.

### **Role of a Dental Therapist:**

*Dental Therapists serve children in Saskatchewan as part of the Children's Dental Program, which mandates routine dental care for children up to sixteen years of age. Most of the provinces Dental Therapists work in northern Saskatchewan.*

### **Qualifications:**

*Dental Therapists are trained at the National School of Dental Therapy in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. This is a two-year program that trains students to provide basic oral health care services including basic oral services including fillings, extractions, and preventative care and health promotion. Dental Therapists work with dentists to provide community-based preventive dental health programs to meet identified community needs.*

Information regarding budgeted positions and vacancies is provided in the following table:

**Table 1 – Dental Therapist – Budgeted and vacant positions**

Health Regions	Number of Budgeted Positions (As of August, 2003)		Number of Vacant Budgeted Positions (As of August, 2003)		% Vacancy	
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
Keewatin Yatthe	5					
Mamawetin Churchill River	3					
Saskatoon		*1				
<b>2003 TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>

\*Saskatoon has 1 part time position shared by 2 employees.

**Table 2 – Dental Therapist – Budgeted and vacant position comparison (2002/2003)**

Dental Therapist Classification	Number of Budgeted Positions		Number of Vacant Budgeted Positions		% Vacancy	
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
<b>2002 TOTALS:</b> (All Regions)	6	2	2	1	33%	50%
<b>COMPARISON</b> (2002 vs. 2003)	-2	-1	-2	-1	-33%	-50%

## ANALYSIS

The MSRC discussed the Labour Market Criteria as guided by the Market Supplement Program framework.

**SERVICE DELIVERY IMPACTS:** *(Employers were asked to provide information that addresses current service delivery impacts resulting from staff shortages, potential staff short term service delivery impacts, potential long term service delivery impacts and options for alternative service delivery models).*

The three health regions reported that they currently do not have service delivery issues. In the past year, vacancies have been filled and service has begun to return to regular levels. One region reported that service to the Children's Program has just started to catch up with the backlog, which resulted from several years of unfilled vacancies.

One other region reported that although there is currently a full staff complement, vacancies can occur at any time in the future because of wage disparity with the private sector. The region also states that any vacancy would create service delivery issues.

**VACANCY RATE ANALYSIS:** *(Employers were requested to provide information about the frequency and timing of vacancy occurrences (i.e., seasonal vacancies; do the vacancies always follow an event; etc.) and to identify trends that may affect recruitment/retention efforts).*

The three regions reported that there are no current vacancies in the province.

The last market supplement review in August 2002 revealed the following vacancy rates: 33% for full time positions (two of six positions) and 50% for part time positions (one of two positions).

Two of the three regions stated that the implementation of the market supplement contributed to the successful recruitment of candidates in the past year. The third region did not have vacancies in 2002.

One region reported that the average recruiting time was reduced to two months. In the past, the region reported that recruitment could take up to twelve months.

**TURNOVER RATES:** *(Employers were asked to provide local analysis of reasons for leaving and trends that may be emerging. They were also asked to provide annual turnover loss of employees to other competitor employers} ratio to the existing staff complement {budgeted positions} in the given occupation.)*

The three regions have reported that turnover is low; one of these reported a turnover of one employee.

**RECRUITMENT ISSUE ANALYSIS:** *(Employers were asked to provide information such as length of recruitment times, training investments, licensing issues, supply and demand issues, etc., as well as information that would identify trends that may affect recruitment and/or retention efforts).*

Recruitment and retention initiatives have included standard practices such as advertising i.e. newspapers, internet, etc., attending career fairs. In addition, employers have implemented other initiatives that have included: increasing the number of FTE's to address workload pressures; assisting current employees to take the Dental Therapy Program for a one year return for service agreement; offering signing bonuses i.e. \$1,378; and, providing relocation allowances i.e. \$3,000.

**SALARY MARKET CONDITIONS:** *(Employers were asked to identify situations where their salary levels are lower than other employers that they would expect to recruit employees from or other employers that recruit their employees. This may be local, provincial, regional, national or international depending on the occupation group and traditional recruitment relationships. Cost of living considerations may or may not be appropriate to factor into market salary comparisons).*

Prior to October 16, 2002, the wage rate (top step) for Dental Therapists was \$20.620 and increased effective October 16, 2002 to \$24.850 (including market supplement component). This represents a \$4.23 per hour (or 20.5%) increase.

Other jurisdictions (Alberta) are currently bargaining the Dental Therapist classification rate of pay at the time of this report.

## **CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Considering the labour market criteria under the provincial framework, the Market Supplement Review Committee concludes:

- Health Regions have been able to fill all Dental Therapist vacancies in the past year and therefore service delivery issues have improved however, the employers continue to manage a backlog of service delivery.
- Competitive pressures by other Saskatchewan employers continue to exist.

Having reviewed the employer information and considering the labour market criteria defined by the market supplement framework, the Market Supplement Review Committee recommends:

- To maintain the current temporary market supplement for the Dental Therapist classification.

**APPENDIX A**

**Market Supplement Consideration Request – Dental Therapist**

**Employer Respondents**

1. Keewatin Yatthe
2. Mamawetin Churchill River
3. Saskatoon