

# Policy Statement 2.11 – Dental Volunteers

## Position Summary

Members of dental teams should support volunteer programs and act ethically in the best interests of the community. Volunteer dental care should seek to provide optimal care and adopt a person-centred approach considering the values of the individual and the community.

## 1. Background

- 1.1. Dental care is an important element of humanitarian aid.
- 1.2. Many Australian dentists, allied dental personnel and other committed personnel give their time freely to provide oral health services, strategic management, education and training, equipment and materials to advance the oral health of disadvantaged groups. Dental societies, service clubs and missionary organisations also provide support.
- 1.3. Volunteer programs may include supporting persons experiencing oral health problems as a result of domestic violence, or persons who are financially disadvantaged.
- 1.4. Over the years, there have been several ongoing programs in Australia and overseas sustained by Australian volunteers. Overseas programs tend to target areas where there is reduced access to dental professionals.

### Definitions

- 1.5. DENTAL VOLUNTEER is a person who provides dental services and support without fee or material reward.
- 1.6. HUMANITARIAN AID is material or logistical assistance provided for humanitarian purposes, typically in response to humanitarian crises including natural disaster and man-made disaster.

## 2. Position

- 2.1. Dentists, allied dental personnel and others should support dental volunteer programs.
- 2.2. Volunteering should aim to support local communities to develop and manage ongoing programs.
- 2.3. Volunteer projects should be targeted toward those that are disadvantaged or have special needs
- 2.4. Suitably trained personnel should be available to deal with the consequences of treatment.
- 2.5. ADA has a role in recognising and supporting its members who are dental volunteers.  
Strategies for local provision of ongoing dental care to the community should include the development of a local workforce and infrastructure.
- 2.6. Dental volunteer projects must have the authority of and work in conjunction with relevant local authorities and conform to legal requirements.
- 2.7. Dental volunteers must act in an ethical manner and understand and respect the cultural beliefs and practices of the local community.
- 2.8. Dental volunteers and directors of projects should review and evaluate the programs in which they participate to ensure their ongoing relevance. This could include studying the oral health profile of the community, and any unique local factors contributing to oral disease and strategies for disease control.
- 2.9. Volunteer programs should ensure appropriate follow-up management of patients has been organized where needed and possible.
- 2.10. Every effort should be made to protect the health and safety of dental volunteers, local personnel and patients
- 2.11. Dental volunteers should consult with the local professional body or public health service prior to introducing new materials and equipment to ensure it meets local or national standards and are able to be maintained.
- 2.12. Volunteers should carry appropriate travel, indemnity and medical insurance and comply with the legal requirements for the practice of dentistry in the selected jurisdiction

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- 2.13. Authorities and local communities, their laws, ethics, and cultural beliefs are important and should be understood and respected.

#### **Policy Statement 2.11**

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