THE PATH TO BECOMING A DENTAL THERAPIST IN NEW MEXICO
Community-Based. Patient-Focused.

1. THE COMMUNITY
- Community leaders, health centers, dental practices, and other partners develop a pipeline to cultivate and support potential dental therapists for their community as early as middle school.
- The community nominates candidates for dental therapy school. As part of the process, candidates submit letters of recommendation from community leaders to the school and describe how they will use their education to improve community health.
- Schools select students for the program based on their commitment to the community, leadership, academic achievement and work experience.

2. EDUCATION
- Education includes a rigorous competency-based curriculum of prevention and treatment of underserved populations and communities, as well as cultural competence.
- Students complete an oral health project with an underserved community during school.

3. CLINICAL PRECEPTORSHIP AND LICENSURE
- After graduation, students complete an additional 400 hours of clinical preceptorship under the on-site supervision of a dentist.
- They take their state and regional licensure board exams.
- Now we have a trained, licensed professional committed to the community who is culturally competent to provide quality dental services.

4. BACK TO THE COMMUNITY
- The new dental therapist returns to the community or another underserved community, practices under the off-site supervision of a dentist and is part of the community, contributing to its success.
- Dental therapists are OF the community, FOR the community.

Alaska’s community-based dental therapists have brought dental care to more than 40,000 people who didn’t have access before. Most of Alaska’s dental therapists work in their home communities. Over the course of 10 years, 81% have stayed with the program.* Source: Alaska Native Tribal Healthcare Consortium, 2014.