

Why we do what we do (Part 2)!

In my previous report I discussed two of the three programs of the AAO that our members find provide the greatest value. These being: 1. Education and AAO Annual Session; and 2. The AAO Consumer Awareness Program. The third area of focus is Advocacy at both the Federal and Provincial/State levels.

Advocacy efforts at AAO are overseen by the AAO Advocacy Team and the members of the AAO Council on Governmental Affairs (COGA). Financial support for our federal advocacy efforts come from the AAO PAC and our provincial/state advocacy efforts are funded by the AAO Component Legal Support Fund. All AAO Advocacy Efforts need to be supported by all of our members through contributions and participation.

Mail-order orthodontics is a huge concern for AAO members. "At the Federal level, the AAO has secured Members of Congress to request the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct an investigative study on mail order oversight of medical devices by the Food and Drug Administration and the Federal Trade Commission including orthodontic company products" (AAO Advocacy Fiscal Year Dashboard 21-22). The study commenced this past summer "resulting from AAO advocating about the importance of this probe on mail-order orthodontic companies and the lack of oversight for patient health and safety" (AAO Advocacy Fiscal Year Dashboard 2021-22).

Staff Shortage in orthodontic practices is a common issue for many AAO members. At the Provincial/State level, The Michigan Association of Orthodontists (MAO) worked with AAO Advocacy Team to address this issue in their state.

In a Michigan orthodontist's office, it is commonplace that both a Registered Dental Assistant and dental assistant without any specific training outside of the training and education required, would need the same amount of teaching and practice in orthodontic procedures once in an orthodontist's office. Since dental assistants have a shorter pathway to become eligible to work in a dental office, allowing dental assistants to perform certain orthodontic tasks under direct supervision was not only a practical request, but one solution to help address the workforce issues Michigan orthodontists are facing.

AAO Staff and MAO Leaders met with the Michigan Dental Association and then the Michigan Board of Dentistry Administrator and they discussed reasons for requested changes, the positive effects this would have for the profession, and asked for feedback. MAO and AAO created a list of specific tasks that should be allowed to be delegated to DAs under direct supervision so that they were prepared when the public comment period opened. AAO coordinated with MAO members to provide information and access to submit comments via email during the public comment period. Over 60 MI orthodontists submitted comments

The Michigan Dental Board Rules Committee met to review comments received and provide AAO-supported recommendations. The Committee noted the impact the comments from orthodontists had on an issue that they were not previously aware of. MAO members testified and provided their real-world experience with work force shortage and provided recommendations. The rules committee accepted all AAO's proposed changes. The Board then approved the changes, and they are now under Michigan Department of Health review before enactment.

I trust that you can see that the AAO Advocacy Efforts at both the state/provincial and federal levels are able to influence Dental Boards/Colleges and Congress to review current issues and to bring about change that will protect the health of the public and as a result benefit our members.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions related to AAO and/or our Advocacy efforts.

A special thanks goes out to the MAO and all our Michigan members who contributed to the advocacy efforts related to the staff shortage crisis in Michigan.

Cheers,  
Michael Sherman, BSCc DDS, MSc, MBA  
Trustee