

Snapshot

Erin Barker
Dental Therapist



What do I do?

I'm a dental therapist. I provide dental treatment to kids, adolescents and young adults up to 25 years. I provide them with all the different dental services from preventive oral health to extractions and fillings in a variety of settings, including school vans, dental clinics and at the Dental Hospital in Melbourne. While I deliver care and treatment to children I spend a lot of time talking to parents about their children, their oral hygiene and diet, and all the other things that impact on a child's dental health.

What was my career path?

I did work experience at a dental clinic with a dental therapist on staff. I didn't know a great deal about dental therapy, but I looked it up and saw that it was about getting in and doing the work. Then I went to uni for two years and completed a Diploma of Oral Health Therapy. When I graduated I went for this position here with the School Dental Service.

What do I like most about my role?

While this is a friendly and variable work environment, working in the public sector is also definitely clinically stimulating. If I feel like I need some clinical support, I know I can get on the phone as our dentists are willing to give that support, to get on the phone and talk you through something. I also really enjoy the contact I have with my clients. There are so many parents and children that are appreciative of the service. Especially when you have a kid who is apprehensive, you win the child over, get a whole lot of fantastic work done and they give you a huge thank you. One of the most rewarding parts of my job is knowing I'm helping the people who need it most.

What would I change about my role?

My current position is primarily clinical, treating patients. I would like to pursue an employment opportunity where I could have a mixture of clinical, health promotion and managerial roles.

What skills do I need in my role?

Communication skills are really important. As a dental therapist you have to be able to communicate with staff members, a child and their parents. While you're working you have to tell the child what you're doing, you have to let mum know what you're doing, and you have to tell your dental assistant you need this or that.

Want more information?

Speak with careers teacher

Visit Dentistry in Victoria at
www.health.vic.gov.au/dentistry

Visit the Australian Dental Association
at www.ada.com.au

Visit Dental Health Services Victoria at
www.dhsv.org.au

Visit the School of Dental Sciences,
University of Melbourne at
www.dent.unimelb.edu.au