



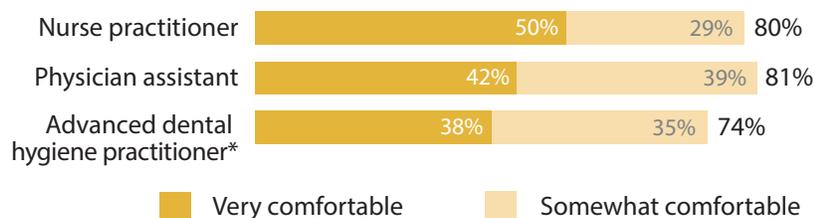
# Kentuckians' comfort with various clinicians

An increasingly diverse group of professionals provides healthcare in Kentucky. These professionals include physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and dentists. Research has shown so-called “midlevel” clinicians<sup>1</sup> such as nurse practitioners (NPs) and physician assistants (PAs) can increase healthcare access for rural and underserved people while limiting costs. Increasing access to care is critical in Kentucky because its residents continue to report some of the highest rates of preventable hospitalizations and some of the lowest rates of annual dental visits in the nation.

Some experts want to add a new “midlevel” profession: Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioners (ADHPs). An ADHP is a dental hygienist with additional education. An ADHP can provide diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic dental services, such as filling cavities. ADHPs are not currently licensed to practice in Kentucky.

<sup>1</sup>The term “midlevel” clinician is used by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to help monitor how prescription medications are dispensed. We recognize that this term is a flawed descriptor for these independently licensed healthcare providers.

**Kentucky adults very or somewhat comfortable with certain types of healthcare providers** (Graph shows only those who were comfortable seeing this type of provider for routine care. Combined values may not equal total because of rounding.)



\*ADHPs are not currently licensed to practice in Kentucky.

To understand how these professions might affect access to care, the **Kentucky Health Issues Poll (KHIP)** asked adults about their comfort seeking routine care from various “midlevel” clinicians.

## Majority comfortable with ‘midlevel’ clinicians

After hearing a brief definition of the profession<sup>2</sup>, the majority of Kentucky adults said they would

be comfortable seeing a nurse practitioner, physician assistant or advanced dental hygiene practitioner for routine care. Nearly 8 in 10 Kentucky adults (79%) said they would be comfortable seeing a NP for routine healthcare. Of those, 50% said they would be very comfortable. Similarly, 8 in 10 adults (81%) said they would be comfortable seeing a PA for routine

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<sup>2</sup>Before assessing the respondent’s comfort level for each profession, the interviewer read the following definitions: A **nurse practitioner** is a special type of nurse who has additional experience, has completed additional education, usually a master’s degree or more, and has a special license such that he or she can see patients, diagnose ordinary illnesses and prescribe medications. A **physician assistant** is a licensed healthcare professional who has specific experience, has completed additional education, usually a master’s degree or more, and has a special license, such that he or she can see patients, diagnose ordinary illnesses, provide some treatment and prescribe medications. An **advanced dental hygiene practitioner** is a new type of dental hygienist who has a specific license and has completed additional education, typically such that he or she can provide diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic oral health services, such as filling ordinary cavities.

These findings unless otherwise noted are from the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, funded by the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati. The Kentucky Health Issues Poll was conducted Sept. 20-Oct. 14, 2012, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 1,680 adults from throughout Kentucky was interviewed by telephone. This included 1,360 landline interviews and 320 cell phone interviews with cell phone users. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to  $\pm 2.5\%$ . There are other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording, or context effects that can introduce error or bias.

For more information about the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, please visit [www.healthy-ky.org](http://www.healthy-ky.org) or [www.healthfoundation.org/kentucky-health-issues-poll](http://www.healthfoundation.org/kentucky-health-issues-poll).

healthcare, with 42% being very comfortable. About 7 in 10 (73%) said they would be comfortable seeing an ADHP for routine dental care, with 38% being very comfortable.

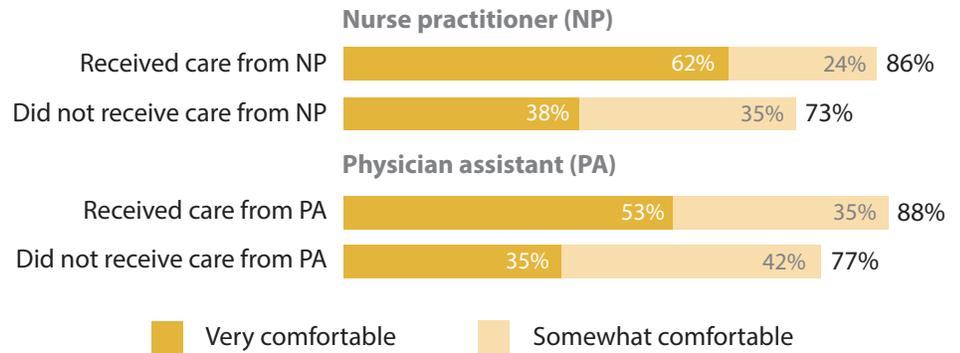
### Comfort higher among those with personal experience

Reported comfort was higher among those who received care from a NP or PA in the past year.<sup>3</sup> Nearly 9 in 10 (86%) of those who had received care from a NP said they would be comfortable seeing a NP for routine healthcare. Only 7 in 10 (73%) of those who had not seen a NP in the past year said they would be comfortable.

The results for PAs were similar. Nearly 9 in 10 (88%) of those who

<sup>3</sup>This question was not asked for ADHPs because they are not currently licensed to practice in Kentucky.

### Comfort with certain types of healthcare providers relative to personal experience in the past year (Graph shows only those who were comfortable seeing this type of provider for routine care.)



had received care from a PA said they would be comfortable seeing a PA for routine healthcare. Nearly 8 in 10 (77%) of those who had not seen a PA in the past year said they would be comfortable.

We do not know from these data if personal experience with “midlevel” clinicians increases comfort with

them, or if people who are more comfortable with “midlevel” clinicians are also more likely to seek care from them. Overall, half (49%) of respondents said they had received healthcare or advice about their health from a NP during the past 12 months. About 4 in 10 (40%) said they had received care from a PA in the past year.