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### Dentist Shortage Affects Rural Nebraska

(KTNC) - Out of Nebraska's 93 counties, 48 are designated as a dentistry shortage area and 20 counties don't have a dentist at all. Those are some of the results from a new study conducted by the Center for Health Policy at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha.

Dr. Kim McFarland co-authored the study and is a professor at UNMC's College of Dentistry. She says many dentists in their 70's and 80's are still practicing in rural areas, so one goal is to increase the number of those wanting to set up shop in those rural areas. (play audio :23 "new graduates.")

Dr. McFarland says simply increasing the number of graduates isn't the answer because the two dental schools in the state are already at capacity. Dr. McFarland says the study identifies several solutions that could help improve dental care. (play audio :23 "right away.")

She says another possibility to get more dentists interested in practicing in rural areas would be to increase the student loan reimbursement rate. The report shows there are 1,028 dentists in the state and more than half practice part time and just under 40-percent practice in a rural area.

Nebraska Radio Network