



MARCH 2023

MEDICAID DENTAL BENEFIT ACT 2023

Bill would make Medicaid adult dental coverage mandatory in all states



On March 6, U.S. Senator Benjamin Cardin (D-MD) and Representative Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-CA-44) reintroduced the Medicaid Dental Benefit Act (S. 570/H.R. 1342). This bill would extend guaranteed, comprehensive dental coverage to all adults who rely on Medicaid for their health care.

Although children enrolled in Medicaid have comprehensive dental coverage, adult dental coverage is optional for state Medicaid programs. Poor oral health can make chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke more difficult and expensive to manage. Among adults facing cost barriers to dental

care, racial disparities have widened in the last decade, and barriers to accessing dental care are one of the most overlooked examples of health disparities. Adults with low incomes; Black, Hispanic, and other people of color; tribal communities; people with disabilities; and those in rural America face the steepest barriers to accessing high-quality and affordable dental services. This kind of healthcare barrier has forced nearly twice as many Black and Latino American adults to suffer from untreated cavities than white adults.

The Medicaid Dental Benefit Act would require state Medicaid programs to provide mandatory adult dental and oral health services. At a minimum, this bill would require state Medicaid programs to provide coverage to prevent and treat disease, promote oral health, restore oral structures to health and function, reduce pain, and treat emergency conditions.

MDAC is profoundly grateful to Senator Cardin for his years of leadership and steadfast commitment to improving the oral health of all Americans. The Medicaid Dental Benefit Act is supported by many national associations and organizations, including the CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, Community Catalyst, Families USA, Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN), Academy of General Dentistry, American Academy of Pediatric Dentists, American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research, American Association of Endodontists, American Dental Association, American Student Dental Association, and NYU Dentistry Center for Oral Health Policy and Management.

To add your organization's name to the sign-on letter urging leaders in Congress to prioritize this policy change that will impact the overall health, employability, and financial security of Medicaid beneficiaries, please use the following links:

- Link to a copy of the [sign-on letter](#)
- Link to the [sign-on form](#)

The deadline to add an organization name to the sign-on letter to Congressional leadership is March 29, 2023.

Study on Use of Silver Diamine Fluoride (SDF) Published in JAMA Network Open

Maryland Healthy Smiles Dental Program will provide reimbursement in accordance with guidelines

A dose of SDF on children's teeth as part of a school-based oral health program prevents cavities as effectively as sealants, according to a New York University College of Dentistry study published in February in the [JAMA Network](#)



[Open](#). The research was conducted just before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cavities are the most common chronic disease in children and tend to affect those from lower-income families at a disproportionately higher rate than those from higher-income ones, the researchers noted. The study included roughly 3,000 schoolchildren from 47 New York schools. The children received either glass ionomer sealants or SDF applications between 2019 and early 2020 at their schools from teams consisting of a supervising dentist, dental hygienists, and registered nurses. Treatments were

paused when the pandemic closed city schools. Two years later, teams returned to the schools to evaluate and conduct follow-up visits. Both sealants and SDF were successful in preventing more than 80% of cavities, and both stopped about 50% of cavities from progressing over the two-year period, the researchers found.

Effective March 1, 2023, the Maryland Department of Health's Maryland Healthy Smiles Dental Program will provide reimbursement for silver diamine fluoride (SDF). Reimbursement will be determined in accordance with established guidelines. For questions and to obtain additional information, please contact mdh.dentalgroup@maryland.gov.

Periodontal Treatment Reduces Diabetes-Related Costs



In a recent article in The Journal of American Dental Association, co-authored by CareQuest Institute for Oral Health researchers, data found that periodontal treatment is associated with reduced overall and outpatient health care costs for patients with diabetes. This study reveals that the relationship between reduced costs and periodontal treatment was more pronounced among Medicaid enrollees.

There is a well-established and bi-directional [link between diabetes and periodontal \(gum\) disease](#). Approximately 10% of the entire US population has diabetes (diagnosed or

undiagnosed), and the risk of developing both diabetes and periodontal disease is higher for patients with lower socioeconomic status, such as those who receive health care coverage through Medicaid.

After the launch of the Maryland Medicaid adult dental pilot program, patients reported that they are having a much easier time controlling their diabetes now that their mouths are healthier. After follow-up visits with their provider, patients reported how much better they felt overall with some noting that their physicians were able to reduce medication dosages and even eliminate some prescriptions due to the absence of active infection in their mouth ([October 2019 MDAC Newsletter](#)).

Read the **2023** article in The Journal of the American Dental Association ([open access](#))

In **2022**, [A study led by the Mayo Clinic](#) found that providing preventive dental care and treatment of periodontal disease results in cost savings for people who have diabetes and/or cardiovascular disease.

In **2021**, a study on [Dental Services and Health Outcomes in the New York State Medicaid Program](#) demonstrates the association between dental care and better health outcomes.

Connecting the Dots: Oral Infection to Rheumatoid Arthritis

National Institute of Health Interim Director Devotes March Blog to Oral Health



The Blog below was posted on <https://directorsblog.nih.gov/> by Lawrence Tabak, D.D.S., Ph.D

To keep your teeth and gums healthy for a lifetime, it's important to brush and floss each day and see your dentist regularly. But what you might not often stop to consider is how essential good oral health really is to your overall well-being. The mouth, after all, is connected to the rest of the body, and oral infections can contribute to problems elsewhere.

A good case in point comes from a study just published in the journal Science Translational Medicine. The study, though small, offers some of the most convincing evidence yet for a direct link between gum, or periodontal, disease and the rheumatoid arthritis that flares most

commonly in the hands, wrists, and knees [1]. If confirmed in larger follow-up studies, the finding suggests that one way for people with both diseases to contend with painful arthritic flare-ups will be to prevent them by practicing good oral hygiene and controlling their periodontal disease.

For many years, there had been suggestions that the oral bacteria causing periodontal disease might contribute to rheumatoid arthritis. For instance, past studies have found that periodontal disease occurs even more often in people with rheumatoid arthritis. People with both conditions also tend to have more severe arthritic symptoms that can be more stubbornly resistant to treatment.

What's been missing is the precise underlying mechanisms to confirm the connection. To help connect the dots, a research team, which included Dana Orange, Rockefeller University, New York, NY, and William Robinson, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, decided to look closer.

They looked first in the blood, not directly at an arthritic joint or an inflamed periodontium, the tissues that hold a tooth in place. They were interested in whether telltale changes in the blood of people with rheumatoid arthritis correlated with the start of another painful flare-up in one or more of their joints.

One of those possible changes involves proteins that carry a particular chemical modification that places the amino acid citrulline on their surface. These citrulline-marked proteins are found in many parts of the human body, including the joints. Intriguingly, they also are present on bacteria, including those in the mouth.

Because of this bacterial connection, the researchers looked in the blood for a specific set of antibodies known as ACPAs, short for anti-citrullinated protein antibodies. They recognize citrullinated proteins that are foreign to the body and mark them for attack.

But the attack isn't always perfectly aimed, and studies have shown the presence of ACPAs in the joints of people with rheumatoid arthritis is associated with increasing disease activity and more frequent arthritis flares. Periodontal disease, too, is especially common in people with rheumatoid arthritis who have abnormally high levels of circulating ACPAs.

In the new study, the researchers followed five women with rheumatoid arthritis for one to four years. Two of them had severe periodontal disease while the other three had no periodontal disease.

Each week, the study volunteers provided a small blood sample for researchers to study changes at the level of RNA, the genetic material that encodes proteins. They also studied changes in certain immune cells, along with any changes in their medication, dental care, or arthritis symptoms. For additional information, they also looked at blood and joint fluid samples from 67 other people with and without arthritis, including individuals with healthy gums or mild, moderate, or severe periodontal disease.

Overall, the evidence shows that people with more severe periodontal disease experienced repeated influxes of oral bacteria into their blood even when they hadn't had a recent dental procedure. These findings suggested that when their inflamed gums became more damaged and "leaky," bacteria in the mouth could spill into the bloodstream.

The researchers also found that those oral invaders carried many citrullinated proteins. Once they got into the bloodstream, inflammatory immune cells detected them and released ACPAs.

The researchers showed in the lab that those antibodies bind the same oral bacteria detected in the blood of people with periodontal disease and rheumatoid arthritis. In fact, those with both conditions had a wide variety of genetically distinct ACPAs, as would be expected if their immune systems were challenged repeatedly over time with oral bacteria.

The overarching idea is that these antibodies prime the immune system to attack oral bacteria. But after it gets started, the attack mistakenly expands and targets citrullinated proteins in the joints. That triggers a flare-up in a joint and the characteristic inflammation, stiffness, and joint damage.

While more study is needed to fill in the molecular details, this discovery raises an encouraging possibility. Taking care of your teeth and periodontal disease isn't just a wise idea to maintain good oral health over a lifetime. For some of the approximately 1 million Americans with rheumatoid arthritis, it may help to manage and perhaps even prevent a painful flare-up in one or more of their affected joints.

Maryland Rural Health Association 2023 Legislative Recap and Reception

MDAC cosponsors annual event featuring state health leaders



The Maryland Dental Action Coalition is proud to be a co-sponsor of the Maryland Rural Health Association's annual post-legislative reception. The 2023 event, *Collaboration Between Urban and Rural Partners for a Healthier*

Featured Speakers:

- Review of the 2023 session by Maryland General Assembly House Health and Government Operations Committee Chair Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk
- Keynote on behalf of the Moore/Miller Administration by Secretary of Health Dr. Laura Herrera Scott
- Update from the Maryland Department of Disabilities Secretary Carol A. Beatty

[Registration](#) is required:

Event Location: Maryland Inn | 58 State Circle, Annapolis, MD 21401

Thank you for your participation and support. We look forward to seeing you there!

Health Right, A Program of AHEC West, Draws to a Close

Provided critical dental services to adults in western Maryland for decades



Unfortunately, without consistent or guaranteed funding, sustaining the program at the funding level needed has been enormously challenging. This factor, combined with Maryland's expansion of dental coverage under Medicaid effective January 2023, has led to the decision that

it is time to bring the program to a close.

The community is fortunate to have other resources that may be able to assist with reduced-cost dental care. Those needing assistance are encouraged to explore the available services and eligibility requirements of these resources: the Health Department dental offices in Allegany and Garrett counties, Hyndman Area Health Center, Family Healthcare of Hagerstown, the Dental Hygiene Clinic of Allegany College of Maryland, the E. A. Hawse Health Centers in West Virginia, and Donated Dental Services of the Maryland Foundation of Dentistry.

The list of those who have supported Health Right is very long – much too long to list here. It includes public, private, and non-profit sources of grants and donations and clinical support from practitioners in public health and private practice. AHEC West Executive Director Susan Stewart expressed her enormous gratitude to all for working with AHEC West and for what their support has meant for those who have been helped with treatment, noting that *they have been blessed to work with these caring funders and dental partners, with the agency personnel and health care professionals in the community who have referred individuals to us, and with our wonderful program participants.*

AHEC West's tremendous stewardship of the program was key to its success and underscored the importance of dental care to a very broad and diverse audience. This effort was key to state legislators' understanding that all Marylanders must be able to access affordable dental care and the state's obligation to provide that opportunity. MDAC is immensely grateful to AHEC West for its partnership with the coalition and for its commitment and dedication to programs that improve the lives of all Western Marylanders.

Community Health Worker (CHW) Program Certification Renewal

Webinars scheduled on requirements and application process



MDAC has long recognized the critical role that CHWs play in helping individuals navigate pathways to good health. They work with individuals in their homes to improve health behaviors, address social determinants of health, and facilitate access to needed services. They also conduct workshops to help individuals manage chronic diseases and participate in outreach events to educate the public on the benefits of good health behaviors. CHWs provide a critical link to better health, working in health departments, clinics, senior centers, hospitals, area health education centers, and community organizations.

The Maryland CHW Program has scheduled a series of webinars on the following dates to address the requirements and application process to renew a CHW certificate. CHW certificates are effective for two years from the date issued.

- Monday, April 3rd, 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm
- Friday, July 7th, 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm
- Wednesday, October 4th, 9:00 am - 10:00 am

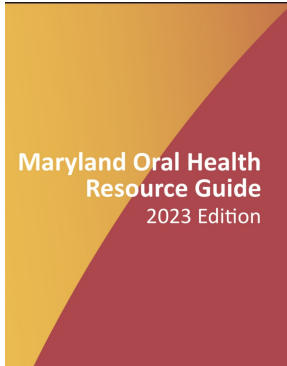
Click [here](#) to pre-register to attend one of these webinars to receive login information a few days prior to the webinar. For more details on the CHW Certificate renewal process, follow the link below:

- [Community Health Worker Certificate Renewal](#) (English)
- [Renovación de CCHW en Maryland](#) (Spanish)

Send your questions to MDH.CHWApplications@maryland.gov or 410-767-5971.

OOH GUIDE LISTS PUBLIC HEALTH DENTAL RESOURCES

Helps families, caregivers, and advocates find affordable dental care services



The article below was submitted by the Maryland Department of Health Office of Oral Health:

The Maryland Oral Health Resource Guide is produced by the Maryland Department of Health Office of Oral Health, to assist families, caregivers, and advocates in finding affordable public health dental care services in Maryland and in the immediate surrounding regions.

The dental public health programs or facilities listed in the directory provide discounted, low-cost, and/ or special needs dental services. Information about other resources including the Maryland Healthy Smiles Program and programs in nearby Delaware and Washington, D.C. also are listed.

The new 2023 Oral Health Resource Guide is now available [online](#). Hard copies will be available shortly by contacting the Office of Oral Health, mdh.oralhealth@maryland.gov

Maryland Oral Health Survey of School Children, sponsored by the *State of Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene*, is a statewide survey conducted periodically to assess the oral health status and needs of children throughout the state to positively affect services and policy.

- The survey sample of schools consists of 63 elementary schools throughout the state of Maryland, with a representative sample of schools from each county
- Children in kindergarten and 3rd grade only will be evaluated
- The survey consists of a quick, non-invasive oral assessment to check for the presence of dental cavities, previous restorations, sealants, and to determine the need for urgent or follow-up care; documentation of findings; and entering findings electronically
- Training will be provided
- Strict COVID-19 infection control protocol will be in place

We are seeking dental hygienists to help us carry out this survey. Please come join Howard University College of Dentistry, the Department of Pediatric Dentistry, and the Maryland Department of Health for this important project and the continuing efforts to achieve optimal oral health in Maryland's children. **Daily rate of compensation \$250.** If interested in participating, please contact: Bianca Dearing at (202) 806-0307 or bianca.dearing@howard.edu.

“Expanding Medicaid benefits to include comprehensive periodontal treatment has the potential to reduce health care costs for patients with Diabetes Mellitus.”

~Periodontal treatment associated with decreased diabetes mellitus–related treatment costs–An analysis of dental and medical claims data. Madhuli Thakkar-Samtani, Lisa J. Heaton, Abigail L. Kelly, Shelly Dionne Taylor, Linda Vidone, Eric P. Tranby. The Journal of the American Dental Association. Online 24 February 2023.

NEWS & RESOURCES

Access to Care

[Oral Health in America](#)

**2018-2023 MARYLAND
ORAL HEALTH PLAN GOALS**

[Unmet Dental Needs Among Mid-to-Older Deaf and Hard of Hearing Women in the U.S.](#)

[Exploring Public Perceptions of Dental Care Affordability in the United States: Mixed Method Analysis via Twitter](#)

[Oral Health Service Access in Racial/Ethnic Minority Neighborhoods: A Geospatial Analysis in Washington, DC, USA](#)

[Sparking Change in Oral Health – CareQuest Institute for Oral Health 2022 Impact Report](#)
[Includes feature on MDAC network efforts to secure comprehensive Medicaid adult dental coverage](#)

[Maryland’s Successful Path to Securing Dental Coverage for Low-Income Adults \(2022\)](#)

[The impact of oral health literacy on dental anxiety and utilization of oral health services among dental patients: a cross sectional study](#)

[Factors influencing oral health behaviours, access and delivery of dental care for autistic children and adolescents: A mixed-methods systematic review](#)

Cancer

[Oral Cancer Prevalence, Mortality, and Costs in Medicaid and Commercial Insurance Claims Data](#)

[Maryland Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan](#)

COVID-19

[Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners Updated Summary of the CDC’s COVID-19 Prevention Guidelines](#)

[COVID Emergency Orders Ending: What’s Next?](#)

[Changes in dental and medical visits before and during the COVID-19 pandemic among U.S. children aged 1–17 years](#)

Diabetes

[A Connection Between Diabetes, Oral Health and Dementia Highlights the Importance of Dental Care](#)

Maryland Oral Health Plan

2018 - 2023



*Framework to Improve
the Oral Health of All
Marylanders*

**MarylandDental
ActionCoalition**

The 2018-2023 Maryland Oral Health Plan outlines 11 oral health goals in three key areas: access to oral health care, oral disease and injury prevention, and oral health literacy and education.

DOWNLOAD THE PLAN

The Maryland Oral Health Plan is financially supported by the Maryland Department of Health.

Oral Health Data

[Comprehensive pregnancy dental benefits improved dental coverage and increased dental care utilization among Medicaid-enrolled pregnant women in Virginia](#)

Oral and Overall Health

[How To Take Care of Your Oral Health](#)

[Oral Hygiene Home Care Practices](#)

[Report: E-cigarettes increase risks to oral health](#)

[The Impact of Food and Nutrition on Your Oral Health](#)

[Oral Health and Mental Health: Exploring the Relationship Between Oral Health and Mental Well-Being](#)

Work Force

[Cost-effectiveness of Dental Workforce Expansion Through the National Health Service Corps and Its Association With Oral Health Outcomes Among US Children](#)

[Find out the relation between diabetes and oral health](#)

Disease Prevention

[More Evidence Links Gum Disease and Dementia Risk](#)

[Periodontitis May Be Linked With Systemic Diseases](#)

[Sweet on Erythritol? Sugar Substitute Linked to Heart Disease](#)

[Baby teeth may one day help identify kids at risk for mental disorders later in life](#)

Fluoridation

[Dental Fluoride Treatment Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Product, By Region And Segment Forecasts, 2023 - 2030](#)

Health Equity

[Engaging Communities of Color to Promote Health Equity: Five Lessons from New York-Based Health Care Organizations](#)

[Oral Health and Dental Care in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Population: A Scoping Review](#)

Maternal and Child Health

[Healthy Mouth for Kids Start Early to Protect Tooth Health](#)

[B'more for Healthy Babies: The Story Behind the Data](#)

[The development of the pediatric oral resistome and its role in dental caries](#)

[Dental Health in Kids: Mom Squad with 3News' Maureen Kyle](#)

[Start your youngster early with good dental health](#)

[On the Horizon for Public Health: Cavities are preventable, and other facts for children's dental health](#)

[Healthy Mouth for Kids](#)

Medicaid/Medicare

[ADA urges CMS to improve Medicare Advantage plans for dental](#)

[Colorado will soon start licensing dental therapists in effort to help expand oral health care options](#)

[Slipping through the cracks: Just how underrepresented are minorities within the dental specialties?](#)

Teledentistry

[Teledentistry: Removing barriers and moving toward implementation](#)

EVENTS

[Integrating Health Systems: Policies and Programs that Work March 27–28, 2023. Boston, MA](#)
[Presented by the Harvard School of Dental Medicine, Initiative to Integrate Oral Health and Medicine](#)

[2023 National Oral Health Conference April 17-19, 2023. Orlando, FL](#)

[2023 DQA Conference Moving Past Disruption to Improve Oral Healthcare April 27-28, 2023 ADA Headquarters, Chicago, IL](#)
[12.0 ADA CERP credits will be awarded.](#)

[CMS 2023 Quality Conference, Building Resilient Communities: Having an Equitable Foundation for Quality Healthcare Virtual: May 1-3, 2023](#)

[Medicaid | Medicare | CHIP \(Children's Health Insurance Program\) Services Dental Association \(MSDA\) May 1–2, 2023 The Mayflower Hotel 1127 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC 20036](#)

[2023 OSAP Annual Conference June 1-2, 2023 The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa Tucson, AZ](#)

WEBINARS

[Beyond Basics: Instrument Reprocessing, Standards and Best Practices in the Dental Office. Mar 23, 2023, 04:00 PM Eastern Time](#)

[Silver Diamine Fluoride: A Cost-Effective Tool for Medical Providers to Thwart Caries and Promote Health Equity Apr 4, 2023, 01:00 PM Eastern Time](#)

[Introduction to Dental Therapy](#)

[consumers](#)

Medical/Dental Integration

[Bacteremia, Antibodies Link Periodontal Disease and RA \(medscape.com\)](#)

[Can Periodontal Treatment Reduce CV Events in Stroke Patients?](#)

[Tackling oral health in primary care: A task that's worth the time](#)

[A Better Way to Fix Your Teeth Is in the Works: Stem Cells](#)

[Study Examines the Link Between Mental Health and Oral Health](#)

[The Possible Connection between Mental Health and Oral Health](#)

Oral Health Policy

[2022 in Review: Oral Health Policy Wins and Opportunities for the Future](#)

[State-Based Oral Health Surveillance Systems \(Revised 2022\)](#)

[Apr 7, 2023 01:00 PM in Eastern Time](#)

[Increasing the Proportion of Oral and Oropharyngeal Cancers Detected at the Earliest Stage](#)

[April 11, 2023, at 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CDT](#)

[Data Driven Dentistry: Finding Practice Success in 2022](#)

[A Healthy Mouth for Every Body Campaign Toolkit](#)

[Webinar on Judicious Use of Opioids](#)

SAVE THE DATE

**MDAC Oral Health Summit
June 26, 2023
Turf Valley Resort
Ellicott City, Maryland**

LEGISLATIVE CONTACTS

[U.S. Senators \(MD\)](#)

[U.S. Representatives \(MD\)](#)

[Maryland State Legislators](#)

SUPPORT MDAC



Give a little to make a big impact! Your gifts, both large and small, will be used to promote good oral health behaviors, prevent oral disease and injury, and improve access to oral health care for all Marylanders, no matter where they live or what their special circumstances might be. Please help us continue this important work.

DONATE NOW!

MDAC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and contributions to support its activities are most appreciated. Thank you.



Join us! To become an MDAC member, [click here.](#)

CONTACT

Do you have events or announcements you'd like to share? Contact MDAC, and we'll make every effort to include them in our next newsletter, as space permits.

[Contact MDAC](#)

JOIN

MDAC is statewide coalition of clinical care providers, governments, non-profits, academic institutions, managed care organizations, foundations and associations working collaboratively to improve the health of all Marylanders through increased oral health promotion, disease prevention, education, advocacy and access to oral health care.

[Join MDAC](#)

www.mdac.us

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