



March 2024

Finding Our Reason To Smile

MDAC launches "My Reason to Smile" social media campaign aimed to spread the word about Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits



Thanks to our collective and collaborative work statewide, nearly 800,000 Maryland adults enrolled in full Maryland Medicaid benefits now have comprehensive dental coverage through the expansion of the Maryland Medical Assistance – Dental Coverage for Adults program.

And now, MDAC is on a mission to help more adult Maryland Medicaid members connect to resources and services that can improve their oral health—and overall health!

[In our January newsletter](#), we announced that MDAC was launching a human-centered social-media-forward campaign to inform adult Medicaid beneficiaries of their new dental benefits, and we are pleased to provide an update on this effort.

In the last newsletter, we reported on findings from MDAC's online survey of Marylanders who are eligible for Medicaid, as well as from a discovery session with dental providers and care coordinators. Key findings showed a need to expand patient outreach and education regarding benefits given nearly half of survey respondents had not seen a dentist in the last two years due to a lack of insurance and/or understanding of what dental services were covered. Additional barriers to accessing care identified included fear, lengthy treatment plans, a lack of dentists accepting adult Medicaid patients, transportation issues, and mistrust of medical services.

Findings from the market research were used to develop a social media campaign titled "**My Reason to Smile.**" This campaign was designed to resonate with current and prospective Medicaid patients, through highlighting the various reasons why it is important to maintain good oral health while addressing misconceptions and barriers head on.



Organic and paid social media posts and YouTube ads will promote key messages about the new benefit, reiterate the vital role oral health plays in maintaining overall health and wellness, and encourage beneficiaries to take the first step to schedule a visit to the dentist, without premiums, deductibles, or copays.

The campaign launched on March 4, with Facebook, and Instagram advertising, as well as non-paid social media posts targeting both English and Spanish-speaking Marylanders. Audiences are directed to a campaign landing page, MyReasonToSmile.org for comprehensive information on newly expanded dental benefits, where to find a dentist, and additional resources. **As of March 26, 2024 the campaign has been viewed nearly 290,000 times**, and generated 2,300 clicks to the landing page. What's more, there have been 2,350 engagements (likes, comments, shares, landing page clicks, etc.) on the ads.



What's Next?

MDAC is currently putting the final touches on resources for our community partners (that's you!) to help share the message about these newly expanded dental benefits. The "Stakeholder Marketing Toolkit" will be posted to the *My Reason to Smile* campaign landing page in April and include a patient letter, a newsletter article/blog post, social media posts, and a rack card. Materials will be available in English and Spanish. Additionally, MDAC is working with our marketing team at Devaney & Associates to develop video ads that will appear on YouTube, beginning in April.

How Can You Help?

MDAC needs your help in spreading the word about the new adult dental benefits! While we are putting the finishing touches on the marketing toolkit, you can help by:

- Liking our social media pages:
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DentalAction>
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/mdacmaryland/>
 - YouTube: Coming soon!
- Sharing our content on your social media pages, and tagging us!
- Visiting and sharing the My Reason to Smile landing page: myreasantosmile.org

Topical Solution Halts Tooth Decay in Children

Clinical study funded by the National Institutes of Health

A topical liquid, silver diamine fluoride (SDF), can stop tooth decay in young children, according to a large clinical trial funded by the National Institutes of Health. The preliminary results, published in *Pediatric Dentistry*, showed that 54% of cavities stopped progressing after SDF treatment, compared to 21% of those treated with a placebo. The study was funded by National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR).



SDF is cleared by the Food and Drug Administration for treating dental sensitivity and is used off label to treat tooth decay, also known as cavities or dental caries. It can be easily and painlessly swabbed onto cavities and has been widely used for management of tooth decay in other countries for decades. Studies suggest that the silver in SDF kills cavity-causing microbes and helps stop destruction of the tooth, while the fluoride helps to rebuild and strengthen the tooth.

Researchers recruited children between the ages of 1 and 5 with severe tooth decay. An interim analysis of 599 children evaluated the proportion of cavity lesions in which decay progression was stopped six months after a single treatment with SDF or a placebo.

To document the effectiveness of SDF, the researchers measured the hardness of cavities before and after treatment. When decay is ongoing, the affected part of the tooth is soft, whereas a hardening of the area indicates that decay has been stopped. The team reported no safety concerns with the treatment. Because the planned interim analysis revealed that the study had met its primary endpoint — to show that SDF was effective in halting the progression of cavities — the trial was stopped early. Ending a trial early can allow particularly effective interventions to move toward FDA approval, and thus, availability to patients, sooner.

Researchers are now analyzing the final data on over 800 children, including assessing SDF's effects on tooth pain and quality of life, as well as potential side effects. Because SDF can darken the color of cavities, which may not be aesthetically pleasing, the researchers are also evaluating patient and parent satisfaction and acceptability. While SDF appears to be quite effective, not every cavity responded to the treatment. Scientists will use future studies to figure out why.

“Oral health problems, such as untreated tooth decay, can have many public health impacts that affect both children and adults,” said NIDCR Director Rena D’Souza, D.D.S., Ph.D., M.S. “This study provides evidence that SDF could be a powerful tool against cavities and help improve health and well-being of children.”

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood, affecting nearly 46% of children in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It disproportionately affects Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black children and children from lower-income households. Left untreated, cavities can put children at risk for chronic pain, impaired development, and long-term oral and overall health

problems. In severe cases, bacteria from a tooth infection can even travel through the body and cause death.

Source: [National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, March 8, 2024](#)

Reference: Fontana M, Khera D, Levy S, Eckert G, Katz B, Yanca E, González-Cabezas C, Moursi A. A Randomized Clinical Trial to Assess Caries Arrest by Using Silver Diamine Fluoride in U.S. Children: Interim Findings. *Pediatr Dent.* 2024 Jan 15;46(1):8-12. PMID: 38449039; PMCID: PMC10921985.

Source: *Medicaid Adult Dental Campaign: Survey & Discovery Session Findings & Recommendations, Feedback from Discovery Group Session on 12/13/23, Internal Report Produced by Devaney & Associates, January 2024.*

Healthcare Pathway Program Mentors Future Healthcare Professionals

Partnership program aims to enhance health literacy and expand diversity in healthcare workforce



The S.M.I.L.E. (Student Mentoring with Immersive Learning and Enrichment) Healthcare Pathway Program is an innovative public-private partnership between Henry Schein, Inc., the National Dental Association, the Robert I. Schattner Foundation, and other professional associations designed to mentor and support aspiring healthcare professionals and enhance inclusivity within the dental field, and ultimately improve health and overall outcomes in underserved communities nationwide.

The S.M.I.L.E. Program empowers underrepresented high school students (grades 9-10) with a passion for oral health to gain exposure to the variety of career opportunities available within the oral health profession, including assisting, hygiene, and dentistry, as well as various practice models and industry roles. Through an immersive, week-long experience, the program provides:

- Mentorship from experienced dental professionals;
- Hands-on learning of real-world procedures and develop practical skills;
- Career pathway exposure to discover diverse dental career options; and
- Capstone project culminating in a presentation focused on translating their learnings into tangible action.

In 2023, the inaugural S.M.I.L.E. program took place at three locations: Howard University College of Dentistry, University of Maryland School of Dentistry, and Mary's Center, a federally qualified health center located in the DC Metro area that delivers affordable, accessible, quality, and value-based primary health care. The program brought together 34 ninth and tenth-grade students from the Metropolitan DC area, Las Vegas, New York, and Ohio, for an immersive learning experience with dental professionals and specialists.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2024 program taking place July 7 to 11, 2024, at Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry, Nashville, TN. Joining Henry Schein, the NDA, and Schattner Foundation in presenting the 2024 program are the Hispanic Dental Association, the Society of American Indian Dentists, Meharry

Medical College School of Dentistry, and the A.T. Still University's Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health, and the A.T. Still University's Missouri School of Dentistry and Oral Health.

The fast-approaching application deadline is March 31, 2024.

Student Criteria

- Students Entering 9th and 10th grade in the 2024—2025 School Year.
- Students who are interested in learning more about careers in dentistry or the healthcare community.
- Required to stay overnight from July 7 – 11, 2024 at Fisk University.
- Submit a completed and signed application by Parent/Guardian by March 31, 2024.

Finalists will be required to participate in an on-camera Zoom interview. Students who are financially disadvantaged will be given priority.

2024 Finalists will receive confirmation before May 31, 2024

[Learn more and apply, click here.](#)

A Best Practice: Improving the Oral Health of Older Adults

An updated report from the Association of State & Territorial Dental Directors

Poor oral health in older adults is a hidden crisis and an overlooked and pressing national concern. Neglected oral health not only affects the quality of life and well-being of older adults, it poses a significant burden on their families. Additionally, it has a negative impact on the economy and healthcare systems due to the pain and disability experienced by older adults and increased systemic health complications due to oral diseases. Prioritizing oral health preventive initiatives for older adults is not just a health decision, but a strategic economic investment for the prosperity of the US.



This best practice report highlights the oral health needs of older adults and the consequences of failing to recognize oral health as pivotal to overall well-being. It outlines the prevailing challenges and presents comprehensive care solutions.

[Click here to download the updated report.](#)

Maryland Consumer Health Information Hub Evaluation

Complete survey by April 2, 2024

Many of you know about the [Maryland Consumer Health Information Hub](#) (the Hub) and its focus on plain language, language access, and information dissemination. As the Hub approaches the end of its first year, they are surveying professionals and partners who have engaged with the Hub. Your responses will help document the Hub's work and characterize Maryland's environment for providing public communications about plain language health, safety, and social services benefits information in residents' primary languages.

The survey should take 10-15 minutes to complete. You will be asked about your participation in and satisfaction with Hub activities, the impact your participation has had on your work, and suggestions for the year ahead. If you have questions about completing this survey, please contact Sandy Saperstein at sandy@sharp-insight.com

Find survey here: <https://www.research.net/r/HubPartnerSurvey2024>

Please complete the survey by April 2, 2024.



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

Maryland Department Of Health/Office Of Oral Health Host Seminar On Integrating Oral Health Into HIV/AIDS Care

The Maryland Department of Health, Office of Oral Health is excited to announce that it will be hosting a virtual continuing education seminar titled **"Integrating Oral Health into the HIV/AIDS Treatment Plan"** on Friday, May 3rd, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

The seminar will host both medical and dental professionals and discuss bridging the gap between medical care and dental care for people living with HIV/AIDS. Seminar topics will include:

- "Barriers to Care and Understanding the Oral-Systemic Connection in PLWHA"
- "The Roles of Healthcare Professionals and the Importance of Interprofessional Collaborative Care"
- "Adopting a Trauma-Informed Care Approach"
- "Statewide Resources for PLWHA".

There is no cost to attend the seminar and attendees will earn 6 CE or 6 CME credits. Please click on the link for more information or to register <https://tinyurl.com/mucjznb2>

"There is an urgent need for a systemic change that promotes lifelong oral health, oral health literacy, universal dental coverage, and an adequately trained geriatric dental workforce. We can improve the quality of oral health for older adults and reduce healthcare costs by prioritizing preventive strategies, integrating medical and dental care and through advocacy-driven policies."

Association of State & Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) Best Practice Approach Report: Improving the Oral Health of Older Adults (Adopted: May 2018, Updated: December 2023)

NEWS & RESOURCES

Access to Care

[Access to Adult Dental Gets Renewed Focus in ACA Marketplace Proposal](#)

[Biden Administration Keeps Door Open for Oral Health Advocacy in 2024](#)

[Dental Utilization and Expenditures, U.S. Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population Aged 2 and Older, 2019-2021](#)

[Community Health Worker Access Act to promote inclusion of CHW in state-run Medicaid programs](#)

Oral Health Equity

[It's Time for Health Care Policy to Prioritize Oral Health Equity](#)

[Leveraging Ethnic Backgrounds to Improve Collection of Race, Ethnicity, and Language Data](#)

[CareQuest Institute: State of Oral Health Equity 2023](#)

[Analysis of Race and Ethnicity, Socioeconomic Factors, and Tooth Decay Among US Children](#)

[Addressing Oral Health Disparities Among Refugees](#)

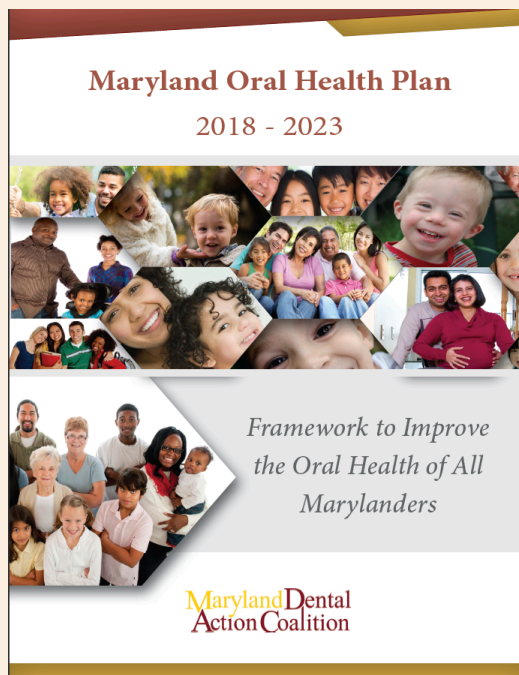
[Using Health Literacy Strategies to Advance Equity in Medicaid](#)

Maternal and Child Health

[How Medical Providers Can Help Improve Oral Health for Head Start Participants](#)

[Policy Statement: Integrating Oral Health Care into Primary Care. Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center](#)

RESOURCE: 2018-2023 Maryland Oral Health Plan



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.

RESOURCE: Community Catalyst Dental Access Project Oral Health Data Cheat Sheet



Medicaid/ Medicare

[Emerging Approaches in Oral Health Care: Considerations for Minimally Invasive Care in Medicaid](#)

Integration of Oral Health with Overall Health

[MCPHS and Harvard Team Up to Bring Interprofessional Education to Life](#)

[Evaluation of a virtual interprofessional oral-systemic health simulation experience in nursing, dentistry, medicine, and pharmacy education](#)

[Making Connections: How a Community Clinic Is Integrating Dental and Overall Care](#)

[Medical Oral Expanded Care in Ohio](#)

Public Health and Prevention

[Study Shows SDF Is Equally Effective as Dental Sealants in Prevention of Tooth Decay](#)

[Funding Increase for Community Health Centers Clears Senate](#)

Workforce Diversity and Development

[Kansas Considers Interstate Licensure Compact](#)

[New Scholarship Offered for Aspiring Dental Hygienists](#)

This resource provides information on oral health data and sources that advocates commonly find helpful in describing access to care barriers, oral health problems, and disparities. These data are also useful for making the case for policy solutions that address these issues. You may also wish to reach out to your state's office of oral health as they may be able to direct you to state-specific publications or data.

[Access the Data Cheat Sheet here](#)

**CLICK FOR DATA
CHEAT SHEET**

Legislative Contacts

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

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

[Maryland State Legislators](#)

Meetings/ Events/ Webinars

[National Oral Health Conference April 15-17, 2024 at Hyatt Regency St. Louis at The Arch - St. Louis, Missouri](#)

[American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry 2024 - May 23-26, 2024 Metro Toronto Convention Center Toronto Canada](#)

[HSDM Initiative to Integrate Oral Health and Medicine 2024 Leadership Forum. - June 4-5, 2024 Boston, Massachusetts](#)

[Academy Health Annual Research Meeting - Baltimore Convention Center - Baltimore, Maryland June 29-July 2, 2024](#)

[National Network for Oral Health Access Annual Conference September 22-25, 2024](#)

[Baltimore, Maryland](#)

[American Public Health Association \(APHA\) Annual Meeting - October 27-30, 2024](#)
[Minneapolis Convention Center](#)
[Minneapolis, MN](#)



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.

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