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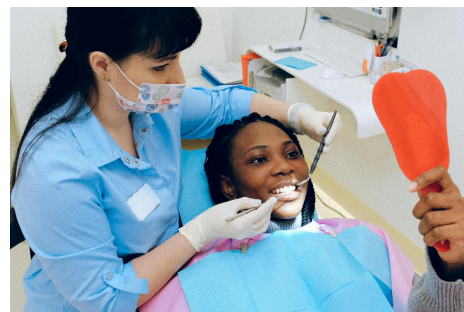
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November 2024

## Maryland Department of Health Releases Oral Health Legislative Report

*Highlights efforts to address oral health safety net programs and access to care*

The Maryland Medicaid Program and the Maryland Department of Health Office of Oral Health recently submitted the annual legislative report to the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly on efforts to improve oral health in Maryland.



The annual oral health report addresses the following initiatives: 1) dental care access under the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, as well as the Office of Oral Health's efforts to improve access; 2) the Oral Health Safety Net Program; and 3) the Oral Cancer Initiative. The report includes data and other information on the following, as well as other related oral health issues:

- Maryland Medicaid availability and accessibility of dentists;
- Medicaid dental administrative services organization (ASO) utilization outcomes, and allocation and use of related dental funds;
- The results of the Oral Health Safety Net Program administered by the Office of Oral Health; and
- The findings and recommendations of the Office of Oral Health's Oral Cancer Initiative.

The report focuses on CY 2023 activities and includes the impact that Medicaid has seen on provider participation and utilization of dental care during implementation Y1 of the Adult Dental Expansion.

[Read the report to learn more about 2023 oral health accomplishments in Maryland.](#)

## Oral Health Care Advancements in CMS Final Rule

*Includes coverage of services inextricably linked to certain medical conditions*

Note: The following is an excerpt from the November 1, 2024, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS) Newsroom release, *Calendar Year (CY) 2025 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Final Rule Medicare Parts A & B*

On November 1, 2024, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a rule finalizing changes for Medicare payments under the PFS and other Medicare Part B policies, effective on or after January 1, 2025.

The CY 2025 PFS final rule is one of several final rules that reflect a broader Administration-wide strategy to create a more equitable health care system that results in better accessibility, quality, affordability, empowerment, and innovation for all Medicare beneficiaries.

### Dental and Oral Health Services

We are finalizing our proposal to amend our regulations, at § 411.15(i)(3), to add to the list of clinical scenarios under which FFS Medicare payment may be made for dental services inextricably linked to covered services, to include: (1) dental or oral examination in the inpatient or outpatient setting prior to, or contemporaneously with, Medicare-covered dialysis services for the treatment of end-stage renal disease and (2) medically necessary diagnostic and treatment services to eliminate an oral or dental infection prior to, or contemporaneously with, Medicare-covered dialysis services for the treatment of end-stage renal disease. Interested parties have suggested that we should focus on this patient population and have submitted clinical evidence describing the links between dental and oral health and dialysis for beneficiaries with end-stage renal disease through our established public submissions process.

CMS also solicited comment on the potential connection between dental services and covered services used in the treatment of diabetes, and covered services for individuals with autoimmune diseases receiving immunosuppressive therapies, as well as requesting any additional evidence regarding covered services for sickle cell disease and hemophilia. We received many comments, which we considered and continue to engage with interested parties in clarifying definitions. We remain committed to exploring the inextricable link between dental and medical services associated with these chronic conditions.

A full copy of the CMS announcement can be found [here](#).

An analysis and commentary on the CMS ruling can be found in the [October 21, 2024, JAMA Internal Medicine - Viewpoint Health Care Policy and Law section](#)

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## 2024 Medicaid Reimbursement for Dental Care Services by State

*American Dental Association/Health Policy Institute Issues Updated Report*

The American Dental Association Health Policy Institute has released its latest update of Medicaid reimbursement for child and adult dental care services by state. Medicaid fee-for-service reimbursement is measured as a percentage of dentists' original fees

for select procedures. Data are broken down for child and adult dental services as well as by state.



The data table includes Medicaid fee-for-service reimbursement as a percentage of average dentist charge and as a percentage of average private dental insurance payment rates. Data are also represented in maps to enable easy comparisons. [Read the full report.](#)

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## Insights from a Maryland Prenatal Postpartum Advisory Board Community Health Worker: An Interview with Giselle Joseph



### Background

The Maryland Prenatal Postpartum Advisory Board (PPAB) was formed in 2021 to jumpstart legislative advances including Maryland's expanded Medicaid dental coverage program. The Board's mission is to develop and implement inclusive approaches to addressing oral health disparities and shaping equitable healthcare systems. The Board is comprised of mothers who are on Medicaid and represent people who benefit from the program, prenatal and oral health providers, and experts from University of Maryland School of Dentistry and the

University of Maryland schools of medicine and social work. MDAC supported the PPAB as a member of the Strategic Oversight Committee, and now as an advisor and resource on the project.

MDAC recognizes the critical role that community health workers (CHWs) play in improving the health and quality of life of Marylanders. To help provide insight and provide a unique perspective on what drives and inspires CHWs in their work, MDAC had the opportunity to interview **Giselle Joseph**, a community health worker and a member of the PPAB. Below is a snippet of our conversation, highlighting how community health workers can educate and empower others to improve oral health.

### Why did you become a community health worker?

What inspired me to become a community health worker was witnessing health disparities in the community. I used to live in New York and when I came to Baltimore, there was a lot that I saw. I felt the need to advocate for families that I saw struggling with access to basic healthcare. I'm not saying that I didn't see it in New York, but I didn't see it as prominently as I do in Baltimore. I just wanted to make a difference. My journey led me to focus on moms and when the opportunity came from [University of Maryland School of Dentistry, Department of Dental Hygiene] to join the PPAB, I realized that oral health was overlooked. [Oral health of the mother] wasn't something that we really focused on [in my previous work as a CHW]. Oral health plays a crucial role for the overall well-being of moms.

**Do the moms you work with welcome the education? Are they skeptical? Do they fear seeing a dentist?**

There are fears about seeing a dentist. Of course, they are going to be skeptical because when you introduce new information to people, they will ask "What is this? How come I didn't know about this?" New information can feel foreign. Being part of the PPAB, is about translating dental information into layman's terms, plain language, so all can understand.

**How do you gain the trust of the parents you work with?**

You can't come into a community and tell people how to be and what to do, without being WITH them. I have been part of the community and worked in the community. Seeing a familiar face builds trust. I am a familiar face. The trusting and lasting relationships that I built within the community are helpful.

**How long have you been doing this?**

I have been a community health worker for over 6 years.

**In your six years as a community health worker, what is the one story that sticks with you?**

I was working with a teen mom. She was 16 years old and struggling with her 1-year-old kid, who had tooth decay issues. But as a teen mom, she did not understand and didn't know that that's what the baby was experiencing. Because of what I learned through my participation on the PPAB and the knowledge that I had prior to that; I was able to support this mom. Teen moms get overwhelmed very quickly. I was able to help her navigate the healthcare system, find the pediatric dentist, and provide her with education on proper oral hygiene practices. Teen moms want to have that support to visit the dentist and to be able to support their baby. I was able to be there in that kind of way.

I enjoy families. I enjoy providing the support. I enjoy advocacy. It just comes naturally. It's a joy.

**What would you like to see the Maryland Prenatal Postpartum Advisory Board do next?**

I see PPAB having more workshops within the community. Tapping into organizations that are already in the community and forming partnerships to bring oral education to the community. It could be churches or arts centers. Go to where families go. Talk to parents while they wait for their kids. Sometimes all you need is 5 minutes, which will matter and have impact.

**What is the most rewarding part about being a CHW?**

There are so many! It is fulfilling to see the community become more informed and proactive about oral health - just to hear other moms open up and say how empowered they feel. This is not just because of the information, but because community health workers like me or other moms sharing impactful information. That gives me a lot of satisfaction. You're not only helping impact their oral health and their overall health, but also their self-esteem.

**You are so active and involved in so many projects! How did you do it all?**

I'm passionate about helping people be where they need to be. I'm committed because when I see things are wrong, I try to look for the right.

I'm very empathetic. I look at moms and I see myself because they have kids, and I have kids as well too. That's why I do it. Because if I didn't do it and I was in their position, I would want someone to be just the way I am to do it for me. I think about being relatable because we all go through some of the same struggles.

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



## **Maryland awarded 3-year Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Grant**

Maryland was one of 15 states to be awarded the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, State Promotion of Strategies to Advance Oral Health, grant. This 3-year grant began September 1, 2024 and will run through August 31, 2027.

The purpose of the grant is to prioritize populations experiencing persistent health disparities and inequities. Grant recipients will: (1) Increase access to evidence-based preventive dental services, (2) Increase access to optimal community water fluoridation and (3) Improve oral health and chronic disease surveillance using secondary data sources to describe oral health trends and will do.

These objectives will be covered across four core topic areas: Community Water Fluoridation, Data analysis to support medical dental integration and evidence-based preventive dental services, Evidence-based preventive dental services (EBPDS), and Infection prevention and control (IPC). The Office of Oral Health (OOH) plans to address the four core topic areas in the following ways:

- **Community water fluoridation:** OOH will work to increase the proportion of the population receiving optimally fluoridated water focusing on populations which are experiencing health inequities.
- **Data analysis to support medical dental integration and evidence-based preventive dental services:** OOH will collect and analyze data about relationships between the oral health of adults with type 2 diabetes, overall health, as well as their use of and access to medical and dental care. This information will be used to create communication materials for public dissemination.
- **Evidence-based preventive dental services (EBPDS):** OOH will fund participant local health departments to increase the number of schools with dental sealant and fluoride varnish programs, and the number of students who receive those services.
- **Infection prevention and control (IPC):** OOH will facilitate training activities to ensure all funded recipient staff are trained on IPC protocols, CDC IPC protocols are integrated into partner programs, and to increase the availability of such trainings across the state.

For questions or additional information regarding this grant, please contact the Office of Oral Health's CDC Program Manager, Giselle Gonzalez, MPH, CHEP at [giselle.gonzalez@maryland.gov](mailto:giselle.gonzalez@maryland.gov)



## Thousands Engage with My Reason to Smile Campaign

*Variety of platforms inform and engage consumers on oral health*

MDAC's *My Reason to Smile* campaign has helped thousands of low-income Marylanders access information about the expanded dental benefits for adults Medicaid participants. This human-centered, social-media-forward campaign has been able to reach adult Medicaid participants on a variety of social media platforms and inform them of their new dental benefits in a way that's engaging, relatable and informative.

Phase 1 of the campaign began in March 2024, with both static and video advertising on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, as well as non-paid social media posts targeting both English and Spanish-speaking Marylanders. The ads direct viewers to our campaign landing page, [MyReasonToSmile.org](https://MyReasonToSmile.org) for comprehensive information on the benefits, where to find a dentist, and additional resources—such as a stakeholder toolkit to help our partners and their communities raise awareness as well as information about receiving dental care during pregnancy.

As of October 31, the campaign has been viewed over 4 million times and generated over 12,000 visits to the campaign landing page. There have been 21,313,085 engagements (likes, comments, shares, landing page clicks, etc.) on the ads, and over 300,000 YouTube video views.



### Introducing Phase 2 of the *My Reason to Smile* Campaign

For the next phase of the campaign, we are expanding the messaging to not only focus on adult Maryland Medicaid members, but also adult Marylanders who are pregnant, thinking about becoming pregnant, or have just had a baby. Our goal for Phase 2 of the *My Reason to Smile* campaign is to connect these pregnant individuals to beneficial oral care and educate them on the fact that general and preventive dental services are safe—and necessary—for them throughout pregnancy and the postpartum period. Phase 2 of the campaign launched in October. The new messaging is being well-received. We have already surpassed our previous monthly engagement metrics!

### Updated Stakeholder Toolkit Resources

We have updated the “stakeholder toolkit” for partners who are interested in helping us spread the message about Maryland Medicaid’s recently expanded MHPDP dental benefits to include [new materials for eligible pregnant and postpartum](#) adults.

[Toolkit materials are available](#) in English and Spanish, and include:

- Social media posts
- A newsletter/blog article
- A patient letter and email
- A rack card (A supply of printed rack cards are available. You can request printed copies [using this form](#).)

### How You Can Help

We need your help in spreading the word about the new adult dental benefits, as well as the extended dental coverage for eligible pregnant and postpartum adults. You can help MDAC by:

- Utilize the Stakeholder Toolkit to share campaign messages.
- Liking our social media pages:
  - LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/maryland-dental-action-coalition/>
  - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DentalAction>
  - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/mdacmaryland/>
  - YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@MarylandDentalActionCoalition>
- Sharing our content on our social media pages and tagging us!
- Visiting and sharing the *My Reason to Smile* [landing page](#).

### Visit MDAC's [new resources page](#) on fluoride!

MDAC is committed to ensuring our network of stakeholders has the resources needed to answer questions about fluoride. We are regularly updating this resource page.

***"You can't come into a community and tell people how to be and what to do, without being WITH them. I have been part of the community and worked in the community. Seeing a familiar face builds trust. I am a familiar face."***

***Giselle Joseph, Community Health Worker***



In a year of changes and challenges, one constant is MDAC's deep appreciation. Thank you for your efforts to increase access to care, prevent oral disease and injury, and improve oral health literacy. Your work to improve the oral and overall health of all Marylanders matters. MDAC is very thankful for you!

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

## NEWS & RESOURCES

### Access to Care

[Community Catalyst "Improving Access to Dental Care Beyond Reimbursement Rates"](#)

[Minimally-Invasive Care: Policy Opportunities to Improve Dental Care Access and Affordability](#)

### Advocacy/Policy

[Advancing Oral Health Equity for Marylanders Maryland Dental Action Coalition Advocacy from 2017-2024](#)

### Fluoride

[RFJ Jr. to Target Water Fluoridation as the Country's Next Health Secretary](#)

[MDAC Resource Page: Fluoride](#)

[Guide to Community Preventive Service](#)

### Maternal and Child Health/Integration of Care

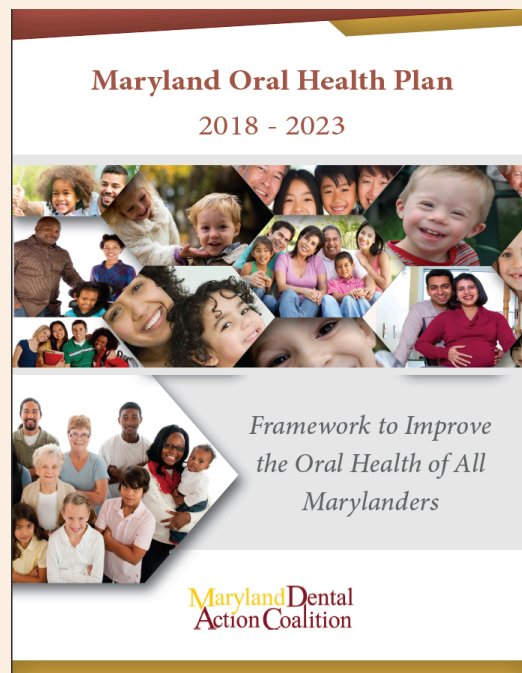
[Networks for Oral Health Integration within the Maternal and Child Health Safety Net](#)

[Oral and Mental Health During and After Pregnancy - The Importance of Medical-Dental-Behavioral Integration for Pregnant People](#)

### RESOURCE: Provider Enrollment Flyer

To learn how Maryland dental providers can enroll in the Maryland Healthy Smiles Dental Program and resources provided, [review this enrollment flyer](#) and share with others!

### RESOURCE: Maryland Oral Health Plan



The Maryland Oral Health Plan outlines 11 oral health goals in three key areas: access to oral health care, oral disease and injury



## Medicare

[The New Medicare Dental Benefit—  
Small but Mighty](#)

## Oral Disease

[The \\$710 Billion Price Tag of Oral  
Disease](#)

## Oral Health and Wellness

[The 2024 State of America’s Oral  
Health and Wellness Report](#)

## Workforce

[Charting the Course for  
Community Health Workers](#)

[License Portability – Dentist and  
Dental Hygiene Compact](#)

[Teamworking in Dentistry](#)

prevention, and oral health literacy  
and education.

**DOWNLOAD THE  
PLAN**

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

## Legislative Contacts

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

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

[Maryland State Legislators](#)

## Meetings/ Events/ Webinars

[National Association of Community  
Health Centers Policy and Issues  
Forum  
February 5-8, 2024  
Marriott Marquis, Washington, DC](#)

[National Oral Health Conference  
April 7-9, 2025  
Double Tree by Hilton Hotel  
Orlando, FL](#)

[American Academy of Pediatric  
Dentistry 2025  
May 22-25, 2025  
Denver, CO](#)

[National Network for Oral Health  
Access  
November 9-12, 2025  
San Antonio, TX](#)



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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