MDAC ADULT DENTAL COLLABORATIVE CONDUCTS DIRECTORY AUDIT
Identifies Opportunities to Improve Maryland Healthy Smiles Provider Directory

Guli Fager, MPH, Director of MDAC's Medicaid Adult Dental Collaborative, submitted the following article:

Maryland Healthy Smiles (MHS) Adult Dental Pilot (ADP) Members are assigned a Dental Home by Skygen (the Dental Benefit Administrator for the MHS program) when they enroll in the program. Members can visit any dentist participating in Maryland Healthy Smiles who is willing to treat them. According to the most recent data from the Maryland Department of Health, more than 550 providers have billed claims for Adult Dental Waiver Program patients in 2020, a significant achievement on the part of the Maryland Department of Health, MDAC, the Maryland State Dental Association, and other partners who worked to recruit providers willing and able to work with adults with disabilities.

While the program has a robust network of participating providers, MDAC's Adult Dental Collaborative received feedback that it was challenging to use Skygen's online directory to find providers that meet the specific needs of some ADP members, including wheelchair accessibility and nitrous oxide for sedation. In order to systematically review information available in the directory, an audit was conducted of Skygen's Maryland Healthy Smiles online provider directory in spring of 2020. Maryland Healthy Smiles members with other coverage types, such as children 0-18, foster youth up to age 21, and pregnant people may also need accommodations for disabilities, so the findings from the audit will benefit patients across the program.

Working in partnership with Dr. Mark Macek from the University of Maryland School of Dentistry, a search protocol was developed to ensure that searches were consistent across counties and criteria. For each county, we searched by the zip code at the center and selected the two checkboxes that indicate accessibility: "Special Needs" and "Accessible to People with Disabilities." Neither of these two checkboxes explicitly indicate the type of accommodations available, but users might reasonably believe that they indicate that search results returned with these boxes checked would be able to accommodate patients with cognitive disabilities and those who use wheelchairs.

The total number of non-duplicated dental provider locations in the state (locations that included multiple dentists at the same office address were counted as one location) identified by our search was 69, nearly 500 fewer than the number that billed claims in 2020, confirming the difficulty reported in using the directory to find providers who could meet accessibility needs.

The directory audit identified a number of opportunities for improvement to increase the accuracy and number of search results for patients, providers and advocates looking for accessible dentists.

Each quarter, Skygen sends all participating providers a CMS-mandated electronic form that includes all of the information included in the directory audit search protocol. However, providers may not open the email, nor are they required to submit a response. Follow- up by phone or in-person site visits could increase the number of participating providers whose directory listings accurately reflect their ability to accommodate various types of common disabilities.

The wording of the checkboxes "Special Needs" and "Accessible to People with Disabilities" is not congruent with the text on the form; these should be updated to match those on Skygen's outreach form, which says "Works with patients with intellectual or developmental disabilities" and "Accessible to people who use wheelchairs".

We also recommend including a checkbox for nitrous oxide, the only type of sedation covered by the Adult Dental Waiver Program, and a drop-down menu of all Maryland Healthy Smiles plan types. Some providers work only with members under the age of 18; some work with children and pregnant people, some work only with adults. Members searching the online database have just one plan at a time, and it is important for them to have information about whether dental practices accept their specific plan type in addition to any needed accommodations. Some providers do have this information included in the "Service Notes" section of their profiles, but this only visible when a searcher clicks on a given entry.

The audit identified a number of opportunities for improvement to the directory that could increase the accuracy of searches for dentists. The Collaborative hopes this report will provide a helpful roadmap to make patient-centered changes to the directory so individuals with disabilities can better access care that meets their specific needs.

Skygen's contract as Dental Benefit Administrator for Maryland Healthy Smiles has been extended through December 2021. MDAC looks forward to working with the Maryland Department of Health and the Dental Benefits Administrator to ensure patients, providers, and advocates are able to use the online directory to access the robust network of participating dentists and enhance the already tremendous success of the Adult Dental Waiver Program.

DENTAL CLINICIANS AUTHORIZED TO ADMNISTER COVID-19 VACCINES
MSDE bulletin outlines guidance, conditions

Acting Maryland Health Secretary Dennis R. Schrader issued an **order** on December 8, 2020 that allows all health care practitioners, including dentists, dental hygienists, and dental radiation technologists, to administer any COVID-19 vaccine that has U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval.

The Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners (MSDE) released a **bulletin** noting the conditions under which dental clinicians may administer the COVID-19 vaccine, which include completion of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (**CDC) COVID-19 vaccine training modules**, training on the preparation and dilution of COVID-19 vaccines to prepare the vaccines for administration.

STATE TO FINALIZE POSTPARTUM DENTAL BENEFIT REGULATIONS
Coverage likely to begin this spring or early summer

As MDAC previously announced, Maryland will expand Medicaid dental coverage for pregnant women into the postpartum period. Women will have Medicaid dental coverage until the end of the second month following the end of their pregnancy.

This coverage will begin as soon as the regulations are finalized. While there have been delays in finalizing regulations for a number of initiatives because of COVID-19, it is likely the postpartum regulations will be finalized and coverage begin in the spring or early summer.
MDAC thanks Governor Hogan for his support of the budget initiative and the tireless advocacy of Delegate Mike McKay (R-1C Allegany and Washington Counties) and Senator Guy Guzzone (D-Howard County).

AHEC WEST LAUNCHES HEALTHY MOMS AND BABIES
RCOP project will serve Allegany, Garrett counties

AHEC West recently launched Healthy Moms & Babies, a new three-year project funded through the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program to reduce the incidence and impact of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) in Allegany and Garrett counties.
AHEC West will work to establish and/or enhance family support services and improve coordination of care in the two counties. Project partners include the Garrett County Health Department, Allegany County Health Department, and Pressley Ridge family services, who will work with AHEC West to address prevention, treatment, and recovery.

Healthy Moms & Babies works to reduce the morbidity and mortality of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) by improving systems of care, family supports, and social determinants of health among women who have a history of or are at risk for SUD/OUD.

HHS RELEASES ACTION PLAN; SURGEON GENERAL CALL TO ACTION
Call to improve maternal health, reduce maternal deaths, address health disparities

To help reduce maternal deaths and disparities that put women at risk before, during, and after pregnancy, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released a **HHS Action Plan to Improve Maternal Health in America** and announced a **public-private partnership with the March of Dimes** U.S. Surgeon General Jerome M. Adams issued a complimentary **Call to Action to Improve Maternal Health** that outlines the roles everyone can play to improve maternal health.

A key to improving maternal health is to improve the oral health of women – before, during, and after

pregnancy. Good oral health during pregnancy is important, because the health of a pregnant woman's teeth and gums affects their overall health and that of their baby. Poor oral health also exacerbates chronic conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and increases the risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, including low birth weight, pre-term delivery, and pre-eclampsia. Each year, pregnancy-related complications claim the lives of approximately 700 women, and more than 25,000 women suffer unintended outcomes of labor and delivery that can result in significant short- or long-term consequences to their health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that two out of three pregnancy-related deaths are preventable.

Pregnancy is an opportune time to address oral health issues and provide oral health education. Many pregnant women are not aware that oral health care, including the use of x-rays, most pain medications, and local anesthesia, is safe during pregnancy. Studies have shown that when a physician talks about oral health during pre- and post-natal visits, their patients are more likely to visit a dentist during pregnancy, practice good oral hygiene habits, and have children with fewer dental caries, the most common chronic childhood disease.

The HHS Action Plan is a roadmap to address risk factors, improve the quality of and access to maternity and postpartum care, and support a research agenda to fill gaps in current evidence. It asks all providers strive to improve health outcomes and access to preventative services for women. The U.S. Surgeon General's Call to Action provides a list of strategies and specific actions to optimize women's health. The public-private partnership with the March of Dimes will address the disparity gap in maternal health outcomes for Black women. To learn more about these initiatives, **watch this archived webinar**.

CDC EXPANDS 500 CITIES PROJECT
Local area health estimates to include data for the entire U.S.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Division of Population Health in the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion recently launched the **PLACES Project.**

PLACES (Population Level Analysis and Community Estimates), an expansion of the **500 Cities Project**, is the first-of-its-kind effort to release estimates, obtained using model-based small area estimation methods, for 27 chronic disease measures for 4 geographic levels: U.S. counties, incorporated and census-designated places, census tracts, and ZIP Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs). The project bolsters the availability of health data for small areas within large and small cities and rural areas and will aid in developing and implementing effective and targeted public health prevention efforts. The public, interactive PLACES website allows users to view, explore, and download uniform county-, place-, tract-, and ZCTA-level data for all areas with population ≥ 50 in the U.S.

PLACES is a partnership between the CDC, the CDC Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

MIA: INFECTION CONTROL, PPE INTEGRAL PART OF HEALTH CARE
Patients cannot be charged for enhanced infection control, PPE

In a December 14, 2020 bulletin, the Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA) noted that some health care providers are attempting to charge patients additional fees for enhanced infection control and personal protective equipment (PPE) used by the provider in light of COVID-19. The MIA is also aware that in some cases, patients who are covered under health or dental plans have been billed directly for these additional fees, as though the use of PPE and other enhanced infection control measures are non-covered services provided to the patient.

It is the enforcement position of the MIA that PPE and additional infection control measures are an integral part of performing any health care service covered under a policy or contract involving physical patient contact. For this reason, a provider's use of such measures, including PPE, may not be considered a separate non-covered service under a carrier's contract with a member or provider, and a health care provider participating in the carrier's network may not charge an additional fee to the patient for PPE or other infection control measures.

For further information, read the MIA bulletin on **Charges for Enhanced Infection Control and Personal Protective Equipment.**

ABELL FOUNDATION ISSUES REPORT ON DIGITAL DIVIDE IN MARYLAND
Highlights disparities that negatively impact internet access; recommends actions

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the many disparities that negatively affect hundreds of thousands of Marylanders, including a lack of computers or tablets and wireline broadband internet connections that enable people to access the internet for school, work, or telehealth.

The Abell Foundation released a report, ***Disconnected in Maryland: Statewide Data Show the Racial and Economic Underpinnings of the Digital Divide***, that shows that the weight of the digital divide, while also an issue in rural areas, falls disproportionately on urban and metro areas and among those who are poor, African-American, or Hispanic.

The report recommends actions to close the digital divide, such as developing a statewide broadband plan, developing partnerships to expand digital inclusion, increasing awareness of internet affordability programs, and improving access to computing devices.

The report was commissioned by the Community Development Network of Maryland and funded through a grant from the Abell Foundation.

ACCREDITATION FOR CHW CERTIFICATION TRAINING NOW OPEN
Five programs accredited by Maryland Department of Health

The accreditation process for Community Health Worker (CHW) Certification Training is now open. New CHW training programs may apply for accreditation at any time.

Join the first five CHW training programs accredited by the Maryland Department of Health!

For more information, visit: **pophealth.health.maryland.gov/community-health-workers**

Find a list of accredited CHW Training Programs, visit:**pophealth.health.maryland.gov/Community-Health-Workers/Pages/Accredited-Community-Health-Worker-Training-Programs**

'WATER, NATURE'S DRINK" THEME OF 2021 NCDHM
Month-long observance promotes benefits of good oral health to children, parents

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

National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM) will take place February 2021. This year's NCDHM campaign slogan is "Water, Nature's Drink!" The NCDHM Program Planning Guide can be found on the American Dental Association (ADA)'s **website.**

NCDHM posters (English on front, Spanish on back) are available free of charge by ordering directly from the **ADA Store**. (If you need more than 200 copies, ADA asks that you contact Elaine Barone, Coordinator (CAAP) at **baronee@ada.org**)

Since the Maryland Oral Health Association (MOHA) is meeting virtually and not in person, the Office of Oral Health recommends that everyone place their own order for posters this year. It is also recommended that you order sooner, rather than later, to allow for any shipping delays.

Wishing Everyone a Happy and Healthy 2021- Maryland Office of Oral Health

If you have any questions or need additional guidance, please do not hesitate to contact Stacy Costello, **stacy.costello@maryland.gov**, at the Office of Oral Health.

"The health of our nation depends on the health of our mothers, and making the U.S. the safest place in the world to give birth is one of my top priorities. A mother or mother-to-be dies every 12 hours in the U.S. These tragedies are unacceptable. We cannot truly improve maternal health until

we acknowledge and address the disparate outcomes many women of color face."

-Vice Admiral Jerome M. Adams, U.S. Surgeon General

NEWS

[CDC Confirms Dentists, Dental Teams, Students in First Phase of COVID-19 Vaccinations](#)

[Anne Arundel Dentists Work Pro Bono After Former Severna Park Practice Leaves Clients Without Teeth, With Broken Implants](#)

[Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks Signs Healthy Kids' Meals Bill](#)

[Four Lessons We Learned About Oral Health in 2020](#)

[Pandemic Backlash Jeopardizes Public Health Powers, Leaders](#)

[ADA, ADEA, AAPD, AADR Urge Congress to Support Oral Health Programs](#)

[Poor Oral Hygiene Linked to Risk of Heart Disease, Diabetes](#)

[Howard County General Hospital Receives State Accreditation to Train Community Health Workers](#)

[Will COVID Cause Your Teeth to Fall Out?](#)

[Following CDC Vote, Leading Oral Health Organization Urges States to Include Oral Health Providers Among First Wave of Vaccine Recipients](#)

[A Patient's Guide to Oral Care](#)

[States Urged to Allow Dentists to Administer Coronavirus Vaccines](#)

[How Bad Is It Really to Not Floss?](#)

[Children's Dental Service Use Reflects Their Parents' Dental Service Experience and Insurance](#)

ARTICLES & RESOURCES

COVID-19

[COVID-19 Impacts on the Dental Care System](#)

MD ADULT DENTAL WAIVER PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS

Thousands of Maryland adults are accessing dental care through the Medicaid Adult Dental Waiver Program.

According to Maryland Medicaid, from January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020:

- **7,610 claims were submitted**
- **4,025 unique members filed valid claims**
- **291 members met annual $800 cap**
- **568 unique providers submitted claims**
- **$1,234,442.32 paid**

From program launch on June 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019:

- **8,006 claims were submitted**
- **4,263 unique members filed valid claims**
- **295 members met annual $800 cap**
- **564 unique providers submitted claims**
- **$1,358,714.53 paid**

2018-2023 MARYLAND ORAL HEALTH PLAN GOALS

Public Health Dental Providers Embrace COVID-19-Related Changes

Clinical Outcomes of a COVID-19 Vaccine: Implementation Over Efficacy

Oral Health Providers of Color Face Greater Hardship from the Impact of Covid-19

Hydrogen Peroxide And Patient Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Roundtable Recap

School Dental Programs Face Stiff Challenges: Programs Struggle to Navigate the Pandemic

How COVID-19 Affects Dually Eligible Nursing Facility Residents

Cross-Professional Collaboration

Fluoride Use in Caries Prevention in the Primary Care Setting

CDC Announces Medical-Dental Integration Partnership

Diabetes

Maryland Diabetes Action Plan

Health Equity

Dismantling White Supremacy in the Oral Health System Starts with Community Power Building

Policy Priorities for the Biden-Harris Administration Part One: Undoing the Harm

Study Shows Link Between Economic, Social, Environmental Factors and Oral Health

Barriers to and Facilitators of Oral Health Among Persons Living With Mental Illness: A Qualitative Study

Healthy People

Just Released: Healthy People 2030's Leading Health Indicators and Overall Health and Well-Being Measures

The End of Decade Snapshot: A Preview of Healthy People 2020 Achievement

Maternal and Child Health

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to

Maryland Oral Health Plan
2018 - 2023

Framework to Improve the Oral Health of All Marylanders

Maryland Dental Action Coalition

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.

ARTICLES & RESOURCES

Systems Change

Emergency and Urgent Dental Visits Among Medicaid Enrollees From 2013 to 2017

COVID-19: The Unintentional Accelerator for Dental Industry Transformation

Teledentistry

AI Technology and Teledentistry: Breaking Barriers to Dental Care

Dentists Are Adopting (and Adapting to) Using Telehealth to Stay Afloat

Patients with Low Incomes and Their Providers Agree: Continue Telehealth

Value-Based Care

Partnerships Between Providers and Advocates: A Key to Oral Health Integration in a Value-Based Care

Improve Maternal Health

Oral Health Care During Pregnancy: A Resource Guide

Oral Health Policy

COVID-19 Tooth Loss and Oral Health Complications Underscore Importance of Maintaining, Expanding Coverage

If Congress Doesn't Invest in States Soon, People May Start Losing Oral Health Services

Medicaid and Medicare Enrollees Need Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefits

Oral Disease Prevention

Coronavirus Disease and Oral Health: Information for Parents About Promoting Good Oral Health at Home

Coronavirus Disease and Oral Health: Information for Parents About Visiting the Dental Office

Rural Health

NRHA COVID-19 Resources

Environment

EVENTS

2021 OSAP Dental Infection Control Boot Camp™, January 25-28, 2021

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.

MDAC is pleased to welcome the following new member:

- Kate Schechter, MA - OPEN (Oral Health Progress and Equity Network)

Join us! To become a 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

FOLLOW US