



April 2021

MDAC SCORES THREE WINS TO IMPROVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO CARE **Expands postpartum coverage, establishes grant program, improves equity**

MDAC's advocacy to improve equitable access to oral health care in Maryland resulted in three key legislative victories during the 2021 legislative session, another significant step towards its ultimate goal to secure an adult dental benefit in Medicaid. The policy changes give Maryland a significant opportunity to improve pregnancy outcomes and the oral and overall health of pregnant people and their babies:



- Maryland will expand Medicaid postpartum coverage for all health care services, including oral health, from 60-days to 1-year. The expansion plans have been codified through the enactment of Senate Bill 923 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Eligibility (Senator Mary Washington – District 43). Governor Hogan supports the initiative and has budgeted funds to begin the expansion in fiscal 2022. This expansion builds upon MDAC's prior success to add oral health coverage, set to begin this summer, to Medicaid's 60-day postpartum coverage; and
- Maryland will establish a prenatal services grant program to serve individuals, including undocumented immigrants, who are not eligible for Medicaid. At MDAC's request, the program will be inclusive of oral health services. The program is established through Senate Bill 777/House Bill 1349 - Public Health - Maryland Prenatal and Infant Care Grant Program Fund (Senator Sarah Elfreth – District 30/Delegate Sample-Hughes – District 37A).
- MDAC coordinated the campaign to ensure equity between Medicaid and private insurance coverage for oral health services. Since the enactment of 2012 legislation, Marylanders with private insurance have had greater flexibility in the timing of preventative oral health services. Marylanders with Medicaid will have that same flexibility, starting in January 2022, with the enactment of Senate Bill 485/House Bill 547 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Dental Prophylaxis Care and Oral Health Exams (Senator Malcolm Augustine – District 47/Delegate Robbyn Lewis – District 46).

In January 2021, a Senate President's Advisory Workgroup on Equity and Inclusion report noted the ongoing - and in some cases growing - health disparities in Maryland, including the impact of maternal and infant mortality. Maryland's maternal mortality rate for Black women is 3.7 times that of White women, and the racial disparity has widened in recent years. Maryland's infant mortality rate for all races/ethnicities has remained level, but remains highest (10.2 per 1,000 in 2018) among the Black non-Hispanic population, nearly 2.5 times higher than the rate for the White non-Hispanic population.

The new legislation will expand access to oral health care for pregnant and postpartum women, a significant opportunity to improve pregnancy outcomes and the oral and overall health of pregnant women. Pregnancy and the postpartum period is an opportune time to address oral health issues and provide oral health education. 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.

MDAC is grateful to long-time oral health champions Delegate Mike McKay and Senator Guy Guzzone and its coalition partners who testified in support of the legislation. MDAC also thanks Governor Hogan for including funding in the state budget. MDAC is grateful to MDAC Government Affairs Consultant Robyn Elliott, and MDAC Policy Committee members Salliann Alborn, Dr. George Acs, Dr. Jonelle Anamelechi, Melani Bell, Ashley Black, Karen Carr Porter, and Chrisie Mulcahey for their guidance and support.

MD SENATORS CARDIN, VAN HOLLEN ASK BIDEN TO EXPAND MEDICARE **Propose inclusion of dental benefits in Medicare as part of American Families Plan**

In an April 25 [letter](#), Senators Ben Cardin and Chris van Hollen urged President Biden to propose a reduction in the Medicare eligibility age and an expansion of Medicare benefits to include hearing, dental, and vision care as part of the American Families Plan. A [similar letter](#) from members of the U.S. House of Representatives was sent to the President the following day.

More than 70 percent of America's seniors have no dental insurance, which has led to an oral health crisis among the nation's elderly and disabled population. Half of senior citizens have not been to the dentist in over a year, more than a quarter are missing all their natural teeth, and 70 percent have gum disease, leading to health issues such as cardiovascular disease.

UM STUDY: MEDICAID EXPANSION MADE MOUTHS HEALTHIER

Better oral health helps Medicaid beneficiaries with work, job search

As the pandemic's economic effects drive more people to enroll in Medicaid as safety-net health insurance, a new [University of Michigan study](#) suggests that the program's dental coverage can improve their oral health in ways that help them seek a new job or do better at the one they have.

The study focuses on the impact of dental coverage offered through Michigan's Medicaid expansion, called the Healthy Michigan Plan. The researchers used a survey and interviews to assess the impact of this coverage on the health and lives of low-income people who enrolled.

In all, 60% of the 4,090 enrollees surveyed for the new study had visited a dentist at least once since enrolling in the Healthy Michigan Plan a year or two earlier, which the researchers verified with state records.

Among those who saw a dentist in that time, 57% said their oral health had improved since enrolling. The percentage who reported better oral health was even higher among Black respondents and those who said they had been uninsured for a year or more before getting covered.

Impact on work lives

Half of the respondents had jobs or were self-employed, though their incomes were low enough to qualify for the Healthy Michigan Plan—about \$15,600 for an individual in the year studied.

Just over 39% of all survey respondents, with jobs or without, said their oral health had improved since they enrolled. Of those who had jobs and reported improved oral health, 76% said that their Healthy Michigan Plan coverage had helped them do a better job at work, compared to 65% of those who had jobs but hadn't experienced improvements in oral health.

Meanwhile, 60% of the unemployed people who said their oral health had improved credited their coverage with helping them look for a job, compared with 51% of those who hadn't experienced improvement in oral health.

Practice and policy implications

The study's authors note that Medicaid coverage in Michigan improves patients' access to primary health care as well as dental care. In both settings, providers can identify patients at risk of oral health problems and suggest treatments for problems so they can be addressed before they worsen.

Nearly half of all survey respondents said their access to dental care had improved thanks to their dental coverage. That percentage was even higher among the 60% of respondents who had been uninsured for at least a year before getting covered under the Healthy Michigan Plan.

PCC REPORT HIGHLIGHTS CRISIS IN ORAL HEALTH CARE ACCESS

Proposed solutions include integration of oral health and primary care

A new Primary Care Coalition (PCC) report, [Innovations in Oral Health and Primary Care Integration](#), provides a comprehensive look at the social and economic costs of unmet oral health issues. The report highlights innovative ways that healthcare clinicians, community, and public health leaders are working together across the country to enable oral health to be part of primary care.

Even before the pandemic, at least one-third of Americans had no dental insurance. New economic reports show that while all U.S. health spending continues to lag pre-pandemic levels, dental services saw the greatest decline in spending at over 17% over the past year. Millions of people across the country struggle with unmet oral health needs (gum disease, broken teeth, oral pain, and more) because as they are uninsured, underinsured, or they live in areas where they cannot find a dentist to treat them. Oral health problems can complicate chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease. Barriers to care can leave patients with serious conditions that can threaten their overall health, quality of life, and long-term economic health and well-being. For people of color, residents of rural communities, people with disabilities, older adults, and other historically marginalized groups, these problems are compounded.

The report curates extensive data on barriers to oral health care and lays out key policy recommendations to

expand oral health access, align oral health and primary care, grow the oral health workforce and broaden scope of practice, and transform system and payment models to focus on value-based care delivery and oral health outcomes.

CAREQUEST INSTITUTE TO BATTLE INEQUITY IN HEALTH CARE

New national non-profit champions oral health care transformation



Amidst a national reckoning on the deep inequities that exist across this country, CareQuest, a new national nonprofit organization with a commitment to creating a health system that is more accessible, equitable, and connected, will serve as a national champion of oral health transformation, because good overall health depends on good oral health. The new organization will amplify and expand the programming, resources, and strengths of past organizations — including the DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement – to broaden its impact and move faster toward creating a health system designed for everyone.

“The past year has laid bare what we knew long before the COVID-19 crisis—we have a health system that does not work for everyone because it was not built for everyone,” said Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan, president and CEO of CareQuest Institute. “We cannot stand by and allow the status quo to define our future. At CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, we are putting everything we have into championing progress and solving these issues. And we will stand with anyone who shares our belief in a future where better health through oral health is possible for everyone.”

A recent survey conducted by CareQuest Institute highlights the urgent need for action to create a more equitable, accessible, and integrated oral health care system. Among its findings, the survey reveals that roughly 6 million adult Americans have lost their dental insurance due to a job loss or benefits change caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, 65% of this group reported having a health symptom that often stems from an oral health disease affecting teeth, gums, or other tissues in the oral cavity. This statistic suggests that lack of dental coverage and inaccessibility of affordable care is fueling an oral health crisis.

Like the COVID-19 pandemic, the oral health crisis is disproportionately impacting communities of color, those living in rural communities, people with disabilities, older adults, and other historically marginalized groups. According to CareQuest Institute’s recent survey, Black Americans suffered a loss of dental coverage at a rate that was more than double that of white Americans, while Asian Americans were three times more likely to have lost coverage.

While this new data illustrates the compounding effects of the pandemic on disparities in health, these disparities are not new. Prior research has shown that Americans in poverty are 2.5 times more likely to have an unmet dental need due to lack of insurance. Black adults are 68% more likely to have an unmet dental need than white adults, and nearly 4 in 10 Black and Latinx adults reside in 14 states where Medicaid’s adult dental benefits cover no services or emergency-only care.

“Transforming health through oral health demands a person-centered, equity-driven approach,” said Ann Greiner, president and CEO, Primary Care Collaborative. “The leadership at CareQuest Institute is committed to that approach and understands that integration of oral health into primary care is fundamental to addressing long-standing disparities.”

CareQuest Institute will operate as a catalyst for systems change, bringing forth ideas and solutions to create a more equitable, accessible, and integrated health system for everyone through grantmaking, care improvement, research, education, policy and advocacy.

PENN DENTAL CREATES FREE CE SERIES

Created to improve access to care for patients with disabilities

The University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine is establishing a [new continuing education series](#) to help improve access to dental care for people with disabilities. The series is created with the support of a \$50,000 gift from Delta Dental Foundation, which funds an online professional development program designed to help oral health professionals better understand and care for patients with disabilities.

Developed through the dental school’s Office of Continuing Education, which is an ADA Continuing Education Recognition Program provider, the series will open to all U.S. licensed dentists and their support personnel for a period of three years at no charge.

Dentists who complete 18 or more of the courses within a three-year period will receive a certificate of completion from Penn Dental Medicine as a disabilities dentistry clinician expert.

MDC-LARP NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Loan repayment applications due by no later than July 30, 2021

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



The Maryland Dent Care Loan Assistance Repayment Program (MDC-LARP) is the student loan repayment program **for dentists**. Like similar physician repayment programs, MDC-LARP provides student loan repayment assistance to dentists for treating Maryland's most vulnerable populations. The purpose of MDC-LARP is to increase access to oral health care services for Maryland Medical Assistance Program (MMAP) recipients by increasing the number of dentists treating this population.

Applications are now being accepted for a 3-year term starting January 1, 2022 and are due no later than **July 30, 2021**.

Application eligibility requirements for the Maryland Dent-Care Loan Assistance Program are:

- Be a licensed dentist in the State of Maryland,
- Have outstanding higher education loan debt,
- Be able to serve three years in a full-time (minimum 32 hours clinical with 8 hours administrative), eligible, dental practice site(s). (Current practice site will work if eligible). (Providers having completed 3 years of service in the MDC-LARP program are not eligible to re-apply.),
- Treat a minimum of 30% Maryland Medicaid recipients as a portion of the total patient population already being seen at practice site,
- Be enrolled with the Maryland Healthy Smiles Program, and
- Able to keep record of all patients treated (Medicaid and non-Medicaid) and provide monthly written reports to the Office of Oral Health.

Additional program information, including application materials, can be found on the Office of Oral Health's [website](#).

Questions? Contact Stacy Costello, MDC LARP Program Manager at stacy.costello@maryland.gov.

ANNE ARUNDEL, WICOMICO HEALTH DEPARTMENTS SEEK CLINICIANS Dentists, hygienists needed

The Anne Arundel County Department of Health is seeking a full time dentist or consultant to provide dental consultation and clinical dental treatment under the direction and supervision of the Dental Program Manager. To learn more and apply for full time dentist position, [click here](#). To learn more and apply for the dentist consultant position, [click here](#).

The Village Dental Center in Salisbury, MD, a free-standing dental office operated by the Wicomico County Health Department, is seeking a dentist and two dental hygienists for one day a month or one day a week. For further information and to apply, please contact Sheila Hammond, Administrative Officer, at sheila.hammond@maryland.gov or (410) 334-3401.

"Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhuman because it often results in physical death."

-The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

NEWS & RESOURCES

Aging & Oral Health

[Dental Care at Midlife: Unmet Needs, Uncertain Future](#)

[Dental Care & Coverage After 65: Experiences & Perspectives](#)

[Pandemic-Driven Disruptions in Oral Health: 10 Transformative Trends in Care for Older Adults](#)

COVID-19

MD ADULT DENTAL WAIVER PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS

[COVID-19 & the HCH Community
Maintaining Access to Dental
Services](#)

[A Coming Surge in Oral Health
Treatment Needs](#)

[Scientists Find Evidence that Novel
Coronavirus Infects the Mouth's Cells](#)

[Good Oral Health Reduces Risk of
Fatal Outcomes From COVID-19](#)

[What Is the Association Between
Income Loss During the COVID-19
Pandemic and Children's Dental
Care?](#)

[Coronavirus Infects the Mouth and
May Spread in Saliva, Study Finds](#)

**Cross-Professional
Collaboration**

[Innovations in Oral Health and
Primary Care Integration](#)

[A Safe Space in the Dental Clinic:
Multidisciplinary Teams Create
Soothing Dental Environments for
Children with Autism](#)

Diabetes

[Maryland Diabetes Action Plan](#)

Disease Prevention

[Oral Health Behaviors and
Availability of Dental Services Among
Children and Adults](#)

[Maryland's Mouths Matter Fluoride
Varnish and Oral Health Screening
Program](#)

[Evidence-Based Recommendations
for the Oral Health of Patients with
Parkinson's Disease](#)

Health Equity

[Elevating Dentistry Through Diversity](#)

[HPI Publishes Findings into Racial
Disparities in Oral Health](#)

[To Advance Health Equity, Federal
Policy Makers Should Build On
Lessons From State Medicaid
Experiments](#)

[Our Black Maternal Health Crisis Is a](#)



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

According to Maryland Medicaid, from January 1, 2021 through April 27, 2021:

- 2,593 claims were submitted
- 1,859 unique members filed valid claims
- 68 members met annual \$800 cap
- 416 unique providers submitted claims
- \$419,682.46 paid

From January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020:

- 7,892 claims were submitted
- 4,126 unique members filed valid claims
- 313 members met annual \$800 cap
- 576 unique providers submitted claims
- \$1,279,673.21 paid

Note: 2020 numbers have been adjusted to reflect claims received after the first of the year for services performed in 2020.

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

[Racial Justice Issue That Demands Bold Solutions](#)

Maternal and Child Health

[2021 Black Maternal Health Week: New Opportunities to Take Action!](#)

[Oral Health Care During Pregnancy: A Resource Guide](#)

[Improving Access to Dental Care for Pregnant Women through Education, Integration of Health Services, Insurance Coverage, an Appropriate Dental Workforce, and Research](#)

Medicaid

[Beneficiaries' Perspectives on Improved Oral Health and Its Mediators After Medicaid Expansion in Michigan: A Mixed Methods Study](#)

[The Catastrophic Cost of Uninsurance: COVID-19 Cases and Deaths Closely Tied to America's Health Coverage Gaps](#)

Oral Health & Overall Health

[Study Suggests Periodontitis May Be a Marker of Hypertension](#)

[Heart Disease Prevention: How Much Does Oral Health Matter?](#)

[People with Severe Gum Disease May Be Twice As Likely to Have Increased Blood Pressure](#)

Oral Health Policy

[Medicaid and Medicare Enrollees Need Dental, Vision, and Hearing Benefits](#)

[Oral Health is On the Agenda](#)

[Oral Health Policy Equity Tool](#)

Oral Health Workforce

[JDE Article: "Very Little Progress" in U.S. Dental Schools Enrolling Black Students](#)

[Underrepresented Minority Dentists: Quantifying Their Numbers And Characterizing The Communities They Serve](#)

Rural Health

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.

WEBINARS

[Impact of COVID-19 on Dental Hygienists: Ongoing Research Update, May 4, 2021](#)

[Learning from Health System Initiatives: What Can Be Done to Scale Up Integration?, May 18, 2021](#)

[Learning from the Convergence of Medical and Dental Insurance: Who's Driving the Change?, June 15, 2021](#)

[Vaping and Oral Health: Seeing Through Clouds \(recorded\)](#)

PODCASTS

[Assessing the State of American Public Health in the Age of COVID-19](#)

EVENTS

[2021 OSAP Virtual Conference, June 2-5, 2021](#)

[The Virtual National Health Equity Summit,](#)

[Rural Early Childhood Health Promotion Toolkit](#)

[NRHA COVID-19 Resources](#)

Teledentistry

[Preparing for Teledentistry: A Guide for Dental Practices](#)

[Insights Brief: Use of Health Information Technology Among Dental Practices](#)

[June 7-10, 2021](#)

[Public Health Improvement Training, June 7-9, 2021](#)

[ADA SmileCon, October 11-13, 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:

- Kwanza Graham-Sykes - Foster 2 Forever

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

JOIN

MDAC is statewide coalition of clinical care providers, governments, non-profits, academic

to include them in our next newsletter, as space permits.

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.

[Contact MDAC](#)

[Join MDAC](#)

www.mdac.us

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