



**Community
Catalyst**





For more than two decades, Community Catalyst has been a leading nonprofit national health advocacy organization dedicated to advancing a movement for health equity and justice. We partner with local, state, tribal, and national advocates to leverage and build power so all people can influence decisions that affect their health. Our work spans a range of health access issues. Among other areas of work, **we focus on ensuring everyone can get the dental care they need.**

300+

Partner organizations at the
local and state level

45+

states where we do
our work

9

where we've incubated
health advocacy organizations



Federal Policy Update: Oral Health Threats and Opportunities

OCTOBER 2025 PRESENTED BY KASEY WILSON, MSW





Why Medicaid Matters for Oral Health

- 72.1 million people rely on Medicaid for their health care, including critical dental coverage
- Comprehensive dental coverage for children
- Optional dental coverage for adults – all but 1 state offer coverage
 - 23 million adults have dental coverage through Medicaid

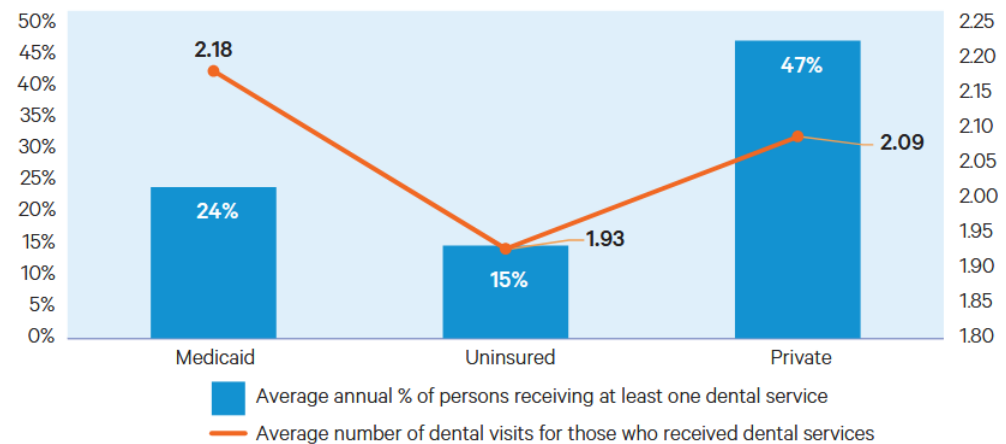


Medicaid Dental Coverage Matters

Medicaid dental coverage:

- ✓ Increases use of dental services
- ✓ Improves oral health outcomes
- ✓ Reduces out-of-pocket costs

Figure 1a: Annual percentage of adults who accessed dental care and annual number of visits for those who received dental services by their medical coverage, average for 2011-2016



Notes: Medicaid denotes individuals covered by Medicaid; Uninsured denotes individuals lacking medical insurance; Private denotes individuals with private medical insurance.

Source: Halasa-Rappel YA, Brow A, Tranby EP, Frantsve-Hawley J. Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits Increase Access and Reduce Out-of-Pocket Expenditures: Part 2 of 3. Boston, MA: CareQuest Institute for Oral Health; November 2019.



Federal Medicaid Cuts & Oral Health Impact

- **Budget reconciliation** bill was signed into law on July 4
 - Includes **\$930 billion in Medicaid cuts and 17 million in coverage losses**
- Federal cuts to Medicaid will cause state-level cuts to Medicaid adult dental benefits (MADB)
 - Prior experiences show that MADB cuts restrict access to care, shift costs to ERs, and strain the dental safety net

What's in the reconciliation bill? (full overview from KFF)

- \$4.5 trillion in regressive tax cuts
- \$350 billion in border + immigration enforcement to target immigrant communities
- Massive cuts to Medicaid:
 - Work requirements
 - Reduced federal \$ for Medicaid expansion
 - Required cost sharing for expansion population
 - More frequent eligibility verifications
 - Limits on retroactive coverage
 - Limits on provider taxes



Administrative Threats to Oral Health

- **Changes to key administrative agencies** also present risks to oral health programs and public health
 - Elimination of HRSA's Chief Dental Officer position
 - Elimination of CDC's Division of Oral Health
 - HRSA Division of Medicine & Dentistry, Oral Health Branch RIF
- White House Make America Healthy Again Commission report and planning document present concerns about fluoride
 - Discusses fluoride in section about exposure to "environmental chemicals"
 - Includes limited evidence about fluoride safety
 - Indicates the CDC will update recommendations about water fluoridation



Where Do We Go From
Here?

Advocacy Opportunities & Additional Resources

- [Federal Medicaid Cuts Threaten State Dental Benefits: Lessons from 6 States](#)
- **Upcoming* Federal Health Care Cuts Put “Optional” Medicaid Services at Risk*
- [Health Care Defense: Advocacy Resources](#)
- [Federal Medicaid Dental Hub – Resource Roundup](#)
- Sign up for Community Catalyst's [Word of Mouth](#) newsletter for regular oral health policy updates



Thank you!

Kasey Wilson
Sr. Policy Analyst, Community Catalyst
Kwilson@communitycatalyst.org

