



Reauthorize preventative and restorative dental services for adult Medicaid recipients

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, Alaska Mental Health Board, Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, and Alaska Commission on Aging, in collaboration with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, jointly support the reauthorization of preventive and restorative dental services for adult Medicaid recipients. Medicaid coverage for these services will sunset June 30, 2009 without legislative reauthorization.

- The Department of Health and Social Services reports that approximately 7,600 adult Medicaid recipients received these dental services in FY08 with 252 participating dental providers.
- The American Dental Association recommends adult preventive and restorative dental services be included in all state Medicaid programs, and as former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop stated, "You're not healthy without good oral health."ⁱ
- Trust beneficiaries continue to list dental services as a priority unmet health needs.
- Dental pain, missing and decayed teeth and infection can affect employment and job advancement, contribute to missed work, dietary choices for seniors, and complicate management of other chronic diseases.ⁱⁱ
- Individuals on public assistance who receive rehabilitative dental treatment (including fillings, extractions, and dentures) were ". . . twice as likely to receive favorable or neutral employment outcomes as they were to receive unfavorable outcomes."ⁱⁱⁱ
- Dental infections due to periodontal disease have been associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes (e.g., pre-term births)^{iv}, management problems for individuals with diabetes, risks for pneumonia in nursing homes, and other chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease.^v
- The bacteria involved with the dental decay process are typically passed parent to child. Part of the efforts to reduce dental decay in young children relates to reducing the level of dental infection in the caregiver.^{vi} Additionally, parents with dental coverage are more likely to access dental services for their children.
- The coverage of preventive and restorative dental care for adult Medicaid recipients along with necessary behavioral changes, over the long term, offer the potential for

reduced utilization of emergent dental services (e.g., accessing the hospital emergency room for management of a dental infection).

Supporters: AARP-Alaska, Alaska Public Health Association, Alaska Dental Society All-Alaska Pediatric Partnership, ANTHC and Alaska Primary Care Association.

ⁱ Oral Health America, <http://www.oralhealthamerica.org/whoweare.html>, noting quote from C. Everett Koop, former U.S. Surgeon General.

ⁱⁱ Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), “The oral health and chronic disease connection”, available at: http://www.astho.org/templates/display_pub.php?pub_id=327, May 2002.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Dental Treatment Highly Effective in Helping Welfare Recipients Gain Employment”, University of California – San Francisco School of Dentistry”, press release, March 10, 2004.

^{iv} Lief S, Hared H, McKaig R, et al., “Periodontitis and Preterm Low Birth Weight in Pregnant Women”, *Journal of Dental Research*, 2000; 79(supplemental):608.

^v U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS), *Oral Health in America: A Report of the U.S. Surgeon General*, USDHSS, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Medicine, 2000.

^{vi} Berkowitz, RJ, “Causes, treatment and prevention of early childhood caries: a microbiologic perspective”, *Journal of the Canadian Dental Association*, 69(5):304-307b, 2003.