



Adult Dental Coverage in Medicaid will Save Money and Improve Health

Medicaid does not currently include comprehensive dental care for adults; providing this benefit will help the Commonwealth realize cost savings related to reduced emergency department (ED) use, chronic disease management, and a reduction in opioid prescribing.

Please Include Funding for a Medicaid Adult Dental Benefit in the Biennial Budget

1 Reduce Avoidable Emergency Department Visits

- Virginia spent **\$3.31 million** on 12,617 visits to the ED for dental-related pain and infection - no treatment is provided in the ED; if these adults had a dental benefit they could seek care and treatment in an appropriate dental setting.
- One urban hospital in Virginia spent **\$1.4 million** on 889 ED visits; no treatment was provided, only assistance with pain management and infection.

2 Improve Chronic Disease Outcomes and Save Money

- People with gum disease are at increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease, and diabetes and of having a stroke
- Dental treatment improves chronic disease outcomes and saves money; when a diabetic's dental disease is treated they visit the hospital 39% less, visit the doctor 13% less and save \$2,840 in annual medical costs compared to diabetics with dental disease.
- A recent study showed one Virginia skilled nursing center **saved \$1.93 million dollars** in 13 months through tooth brushing, which prevented costly and dangerous pneumonia.

3 Reduce Opioid Prescribing and Improve SUD outcomes

- 56% of the Medicaid beneficiaries who visited the ED for dental issues filled an opioid prescription within 30 days at a cost to Medicaid of \$121,269.
- Individuals enrolled in a SUD treatment program who received dental treatment were found to be **twice as likely to get a job** on discharge; twice as likely to abstain from drug use; 1/3 less likely to go into homelessness compared to the group who did not receive comprehensive dental treatment

4 Improve Overall Oral Health

- Over **50% of Virginians** without dental coverage put off seeing a dentist because of cost.
- 54% of older adults cited dental care as their second-most frequent unmet need.

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