



Improve Health and Save Costs for Older Adults & Virginians with Disabilities

An Adult Dental Benefit in Medicaid

Medicaid does not provide a comprehensive dental benefit for adults; providing access to dental services for older adults and adults with disabilities currently enrolled Medicaid will help the Commonwealth realize cost savings related to: reduced emergency department (ED) use, chronic disease management, and improve their quality of life.

1 *Improve the Health of Older Adults and Virginians with Disabilities*

- 54% of older adults cited dental care as their most frequent unmet need, second only to transportation. Medicare does not provide any dental coverage.ⁱ
- 27% of older adults making less than \$25,000 per year report complete tooth loss; only 3% of older adults with incomes over \$75,000 per year report complete tooth loss.ⁱⁱ
- Nearly **two out of five low-income seniors** report they “very often” struggle with biting and chewing due to poor oral health, which can compound nutritional problems.ⁱⁱⁱ
- One study showed more than 80% of individuals with developmental disabilities (IDD) had gum disease and more than 30% had untreated dental disease.^{iv}

2 *Reduce Avoidable Emergency Department Visits*

- Virginia Medicaid spent **\$3.31 million** on 12,617 visits to the ED for dental related issues (no dental treatment is provided in the ED).^v
- One urban hospital in Virginia reported \$1.4 million in charges for 889 ED visits.^{vi}

3 *Improve Chronic Disease Outcomes and Save Money*

- Virginia Medicaid currently covers one-third of all adult Virginians with disabilities and three-fifths of all nursing home residents; both population groups have high rates of chronic disease and poor access to dental care.^{vii}
- With dental treatment, diabetics had an average reduction of 39% in annual hospital admissions, an annual average of 13% fewer physician visits, and a \$2,840 reduction in annual medical costs; similar cost savings are shown for individuals who experience heart disease and stroke.^{viii}
- A recent study showed one Virginia skilled nursing center saved \$1.93 million dollars in 13 months through consistent patient tooth brushing, which prevented costly and dangerous pneumonia.^{ix}

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ⁱ Medicaid oral health coverage for older adults and people with disabilities. *National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities*. 2016. <http://www.nasuad.org/sites/nasuad/files/dentaquest%2010.pdf>. Accessed June 20, 2019.

ⁱⁱ Slade GD, Akinkugbe AA, Sanders AE. Projections of U.S. Edentulism prevalence following 5 decades of decline. *Journal of Dental Research*. 2014;93(10):959–965. doi:10.1177/0022034514546165

ⁱⁱⁱ Oral health and well-being in Virginia. *Health Policy Institute and American Dental Association*. 2015. <https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://www.ada.org:443/en/~media/ADA/Science%2520and%2520Research/HPI/OralHealthWell-Being-StateFacts/Virginia-Oral-Health-Well-Being.pdf>. Accessed June 20, 2019.

^{iv} Morgan JP, Minihan PM, Stark PC, et al. The oral health status of 4,732 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of the American Dental Association*. 2012;143(8):838–846. doi: 10.14219/jada.archive.2012.0288

^v Overview of the Virginia all payer claims database. *Virginia Health Information*. 2016. <https://www.vhi.org/apcd/APCD%20Overview.pdf>. Accessed June 20, 2019.

^{vi} 2016 Report from Richmond-based Hospital

^{vii} Virginia Medicaid fact sheet. *Kaiser Family Foundation*. 2018. <http://files.kff.org/attachment/fact-sheet-medicaid-state-VA>. Accessed June 20, 2019.

^{viii} Jeffcoat MK, Jeffcoat RL, Gladkowski PA, Bramson JB, Blum JJ. Impact of periodontal therapy on general health: Evidence from insurance data for five systemic conditions. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 2014;47(2): 166-174. doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2014.04.001.

^{ix} Rife, Luanne. Salem VA leads national research: Tooth brushing each day keeps pneumonia at bay. *The Roanoke Times*. 2018. https://www.roanoke.com/news/local/salem-va-leads-national-research-tooth-brushing-each-day-keeps/article_8a959bde-f3c4-11e7-a933-7b5029467621.html. Accessed June 20, 2019.