



American Dental Association
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Meth Mouth Correctional Costs and Reentry Support Act

House Bill — H.R. 3187 — Baird/Sullivan
Senate Bill — S. 1907 — Baucus/Coleman

An unforeseen consequence of the methamphetamine epidemic has been the growing need for costly dental care. Nowhere is the problem more evident than the dentists' chairs inside prisons.

In correctional settings across the country, more and more dentists are encountering patients with a distinct and often debilitating pattern of oral decay. The condition (known as “meth mouth”) is characterized by teeth that are blackened, stained, rotting, and crumbling or falling apart. The damage is often so severe that extraction is the only viable treatment option.

Jail and prison dental costs have risen sharply as the methamphetamine epidemic has become more widespread. By some accounts, more than 30 percent of prison inmates suffer from meth mouth and about 40 percent of correctional dental spending goes toward repairing or removing methamphetamine-ravaged teeth.

Few studies have been published about meth mouth or about the oral health needs of inmates generally. But anecdotal evidence suggests that the rise in correctional dental costs is because of meth. Almost 30 percent of jail inmates and 25 percent of state prisoners have a history of methamphetamine use.

Dental problems are common among drug users. Many do not care for their teeth regularly and most do not see a dentist often. But methamphetamine seems to be taking a unique and horrific toll inside its users' mouths.

The *Meth Mouth Correctional Costs and Reentry Support Act* will—

- expand and intensify the Justice Department's research on the oral health status of jail and prison inmates and the provision of dental care in correctional facilities;
- authorize a study to determine whether, how, and to what degree methamphetamine use affects the demand for (and provision of) dental care in correctional facilities;
- make short-term, needs-based grants available for the hiring of ancillary dentists in correctional facilities; and
- direct the Attorney General to ensure that oral health and dental care are made part of the Justice Department's many prisoner reentry initiatives.

For more information, please visit www.ada.org/goto/methbills.

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