

ADA American
Dental
Association®
America's leading
advocate for oral health

INFOpak

2010

Access to Care

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What is access to care?

Due to the diligent advocacy of dental professionals who reinforce the importance of oral health and promote prevention and early detection, approximately 65% of Americans currently receive the care that they need to maintain a healthy smile. However, the remaining 35% of Americans, including children whose families are economically disadvantaged, racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, low income senior citizens, and people living in remote areas, face challenges accessing dental care. They may have trouble overcoming financial barriers, navigating government assistance programs, or visiting a dental office. Also, many Americans lack basic awareness of oral health issues because of cultural or language barriers, or problems with literacy. Fortunately, with help from law- and policymakers at the state and federal levels, members of the health care community and other stakeholders, the American Dental Association is striving to improve access to oral health care in the United States. This InfoPak is designed to give you an overview of the ADA's Access to Care efforts as well as those of other organizations and government entities.

Access to Care and the ADA

Give Kids A Smile

Give Kids A Smile® is the ADA's signature access to oral health care outreach program. By promoting free, annual service events at locations across the country the ADA aims to encourage parents, health professionals and policymakers to address important access to care issues. Dental professionals participating in Give Kids A Smile provide educational materials, screenings and, free dental care such as cleanings, X-rays and fillings to children. Since the program was initiated by the Greater St. Louis Dental Society in 2002, it has grown into a national event, and in 2009, more than 450,000 children were treated by some 45,000 dental professionals at more than 1,600 sites nationwide.

In 2006, the ADA began to look for ways to expand the impact of Give Kids A Smile beyond the national event. This initiative was labeled "More Than Just a Day." A National Advisory Board now guides expansion efforts, focusing on three primary areas: program enhancement, fundraising and staging an annual symposium to highlight Access to Care programs across the country. Learn more about Give Kids A Smile at www.givekidsasmile.ada.org

OralLongevity

OralLongevity™ is a joint initiative by the ADA, the ADA Foundation, and GlaxoSmithKline that seeks to enhance and preserve the oral health of older Americans. Launched in September 2007, the program encourages elderly patients to visit the dentist and aims to create a dialogue among dental professionals, mature consumers and caregivers across the country. The cornerstone of the OralLongevity outreach effort is a brochure and educational DVD that dentists can use in their office to educate patients. These materials focus on a variety of oral health topics, including dry mouth, cavities, oral cancer, dentures and implants, daily mouth care, and the effects of diabetes, arthritis and medications on oral health. Since its inception, the OralLongevity initiative has provided 157,000 dental professionals with materials and is expanding its outreach to other non-dental health care organizations, such as the American Geriatrics Society. For more information about OralLongevity, visit www.ada.org/ada/orallongevity.

ADA Foundation

The ADA Foundation is organized dentistry's premier charitable and philanthropic organization. The ADA Foundation, like the ADA, is committed to supporting individuals and activities that improve access to oral health care in the United States. Awards such as the E. Bud Tarrson Access to Oral Health Care Award recognize and support dental students who work with vulnerable communities. The Samuel Harris Fund For Children's Dental Health Grants Program and the Give Kids A Smile Grant Program assist charitable organizations by funding oral health care prevention and treatment programs for children. The ADA Foundation supports the American Academy of Pediatric's training of physicians to screen for dental disease and make referrals for care, as well as efforts to expand Give Kids A Smile® and broaden the effort to reach children in need of care. Through philanthropic activities like these, the ADA Foundation encourages expansion of Access to Care activities. For more information on ADA Foundation awards, fellowships, scholarships and grants, visit www.adafoundation.org.

ADA Council on Access, Prevention and Interprofessional Relations

The Council on Access, Prevention and Interprofessional Relations (CAPIR) is one of the ADA's 13 councils and commissions and is dedicated to Access to Care issues. The primary purpose of CAPIR is to broaden the scope of oral health care within the total health care system. It promotes preventive dentistry as a cornerstone of oral health care, leads and coordinates access to dental care activities for specific population groups, and recommends policies and formulates programs on issues pertaining to the relationship of dentistry to medicine.

Some of CAPIR's major goals include evaluating trends in dental public health and Access to Care that enhance community oral health; advising and recommending policies to other ADA agencies; and developing programs relating to Access to Care, population-based prevention, including water fluoridation, and interprofessional relations. CAPIR provides technical assistance to state and local dental societies to assess community oral health needs, develop community oral health infrastructure and capacity, reduce oral health disparities and increase access to care. CAPIR supports the American Indian/Alaska Native Dental Placement Program and is responsible for the successful expansion of Give Kids A Smile Day into a year-round effort.

CAPIR can provide resources to members who wish to develop and/or participate in community-based dental safety net programs. For more information on CAPIR and its activities, contact Dr. Steven Geiermann at 1.800.621.8099 x2667 or geiermanns@ada.org.

In June 2008, CAPIR coordinated a Medicare Provider Symposium. Participants included ADA Member dentists who had at least 1,000 Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) patient visits in the last calendar year, and were in private practice. The primary goal of the Symposium was to discuss the challenges of providing care to Medicaid recipients and explore successful strategies to integrate these patients into private practice settings. Many of the challenges described extended beyond the confines of individual practices and focused on systematic concerns, such as a lack of awareness of the oral health needs of this population and the educational preparedness of dental providers to meet those demands. Most of the group's recommendations for action were directed at systemic concerns, rather than changes that could be implemented immediately within an individual practice. You can access the 2008 Medicaid Provider Symposium Report at www.ada.org/goto/access. A follow-up Medicaid Symposium is planned for July 2010 to explore various business models and lessons learned for successfully incorporating Medicaid and CHIP patients into a private practice.

In March 2009, CAPIR and other ADA agencies convened the national Access to Dental Care Summit, which included a broad spectrum of stakeholders and aimed to research and develop a measurable strategy for addressing access to oral health care problems. You can read the proceedings of the 2009 Access to Dental Care Summit at www.ada.org/goto/access.

Legislative Support and Advocacy

The ADA Department of State Government Affairs works with state and local dental societies to advocate for public policies affecting dentistry at the state level. State Government Affairs provides targeted assistance to state and local dental societies' staff and volunteer leadership and develops and maintains extensive research and tracking resources on dental health policy activities in all states. These resources help in developing state laws that ensure the highest standards of safe and effective dental services for all patients. For more information about State Government Affairs and the ADA advocacy efforts on the state level, contact govtpol@ada.org.

The ADA Departments of Congressional Affairs and Legislative and Regulatory Policy manage organized dentistry's lobbying efforts on the national level. At the time of publication in 2010, much of the advocacy and lobbying efforts regarding Access to Care are centered on health care reform legislation. The ADA is seeking enhanced federal funding for the dental Medicaid program in order to improve the oral health care of millions of low-income Americans who qualify for dental care under Medicaid but who can't access it due to severe underfunding of the program. The ADA supports an emphasis on prevention, which has always been a key component of oral health care in the United States, in health care reform legislation. The ADA also supports adequate funding of public health infrastructure, which is necessary to help break the cycle of oral disease in our country. For example, the ADA supported the establishment of a core public health infrastructure program within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Public Health Investment fund, which will provide additional appropriations for a number of public health programs. Finally, there are provisions in the health care reform legislation that provide enhanced National Health Service Corp student loan repayment programs and improved Title VII funding – all supported by the ADA. To learn more about the ADA's national advocacy and lobbying activities, visit www.ada.org/goto/advocacy or e-mail govtpol@ada.org.

The American Dental Political Action Committee (ADPAC) is organized dentistry's bipartisan voice in government and works to fund and elect candidates to federal office who will protect and nurture the dental profession. ADPAC's presence on Capitol Hill helps to expose access to oral health care issues in the United States, and affect positive change for dental professionals and their patients. For more information on ADPAC visit www.ada.org/prof/advocacy/adpac.

Access to Care and Other Organizations

Medicaid

Medicaid is a state-administered program funded by the federal government that provides health insurance coverage to certain low-income individuals and families. To qualify for Medicaid, an individual must meet financial criteria or may be a member of a group that is "categorically eligible" for the program, such as children in low-income families, pregnant women, and elderly disabled persons with limited resources. Federal law mandates coverage of some groups who fall below specified minimum income levels, but also gives states broad optional authority to extend Medicaid eligibility beyond the minimum federal

standards. The flexibility that states have to establish their own eligibility rules has produced wide state-to-state variation in Medicaid coverage. Learn more about Medicaid by visiting www.cms.hhs.gov/home/medicaid.asp.

Medicaid includes limited provisions for oral health care. Dental services are state-optional for Medicaid-eligible individuals age 21 and over, but Medicaid's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit requires that dental services be provided for Medicaid-eligible individuals under age 21. More information about Medicaid Dental Coverage can be found at www.cms.hhs.gov/MedicaidDentalCoverage/.

Because the ADA is committed to improving access to dental care for low income populations, it works to support adequate funding for the Medicaid program. To learn about the ways the ADA is involved in Medicaid, visit www.ada.org/prof/advocacy/issues/medicaid.

The Children's Health Insurance Program

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is a state administered program jointly funded by federal and state government that provides health insurance coverage for children and pregnant women from families with incomes too high to be eligible for Medicaid, but too low to afford private coverage. As with Medicaid, states design their own CHIP program within federal guidelines. To learn more about CHIP, visit www.cms.hhs.gov/home/chip.asp.

CHIP provides dental coverage only if it is necessary to prevent disease and promote oral health, restore oral structures to health and function, and treat emergency conditions for individuals under age 19 who are CHIP-eligible. More information on CHIP Dental Coverage can be found at www.cms.hhs.gov/CHIPDentalCoverage/.

As with Medicaid, the ADA is invested in the Children's Health Insurance Program. For more information on ADA activities and CHIP visit www.ada.org/prof/advocacy/issues/schip.

National Foundation of Dentistry for the Handicapped

The National Foundation of Dentistry for the Handicapped (NFDH) has been a charitable affiliate of the ADA since 1988. The NFDH provides dental services to people who are disabled, elderly or medically-compromised. The NFDH operates three major programs: Donated Dental Services (DDS), which provides dental care to disabled, elderly or medically-compromised individuals who cannot afford care and are not eligible for public aid; the Bridge/Campaign of Concern, which provides preventive and case management support to individuals who are developmentally disabled; and Dental HouseCalls, which provides dental care to individuals who cannot easily get to a dental office, including nursing home residents, homebound individuals and disabled people living in residential centers. To learn more about the NFDH or to volunteer, visit www.nfdh.org.

Indian Health Service

The Indian Health Service (IHS) is an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is responsible for delivering the full range of health services to American Indians and Alaskan Natives, who remain among the nation's most underserved groups. The IHS employs dentists through the US Public Health Commissioned Corps, the Civil Service, and Direct Tribal hire. Two-week externships are available to fourth year dental students. To learn more about the IHS Division of Oral Health, visit www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/Dental.

US Public Health Commissioned Corps

The U.S. Public Health Commissioned Corps is comprised of more than 6,000 full-time public health professionals whose goal is to serve the public's health needs, promote public health and disease prevention, and advance public health science. The Commissioned Corps is one of America's seven uniformed services and are part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Commissioned Corps Dental officers serve in a variety of settings and perform a diverse range of operational leadership and clinical care within many diverse settings, including state oral health programs, community and migrant health centers, homeless programs, Ryan White HIV/AIDS programs, Indian Health Service and other tribal settings, and Federal prisons. Commissioned Officers also provide research leadership within many diverse programs within the numerous federal agencies, including the Health Resource and Services Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institutes of Health. Learn more about the Commissioned Corps at www.usphs.gov/AboutUs/.

What Can I Do?

If you are interested in public service or in working to relieve some of America's oral health disparities, there are a variety of opportunities available to you. You may choose to work for one of the many public agencies that offer financial incentives to dentists who agree to work in underserved areas or with certain populations. Or, you could volunteer your time and skills in your spare time. There are a variety of options on the local, state and federal level to give back.

Sign Up to Serve:

National Health Service Corps

The National Health Service Corps offers scholarships to U.S. citizens who are enrolled or have been accepted for enrollment in an accredited U.S. dental program. The scholarship covers tuition, required fees, and some other education costs for up to four years, and includes a monthly living stipend. A commitment of one year of service per year of scholarship support (two year minimum) in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA), soon after graduation from dental school, is required. For more information about National Health Service Corps scholarships visit nhsc.hrsa.gov/scholarship/.

The National Health Service Corps also offers loan repayment for up to \$50,000 to licensed General Practice and Pediatric dentists. A two year commitment to serve fulltime in a HPSA is required. HPSA include rural health clinics, Indian Health Service clinics, public health department clinics, hospital-affiliated primary care practices, managed care networks, prisons, and U.S. Immigration, Customs & Enforcement sites. Learn more about National Health Service Corps loan repayment at nhsc.hrsa.gov/loanrepayment/.

Armed Forces Health Professions Scholarships

The U.S. Armed Services offer scholarships to dental students that pay tuition, fees, other educational costs and a monthly stipend. The active duty obligation is one year of service for each year of scholarship support with a minimum of three years of active duty service. To be eligible, a student must be a U.S. citizen enrolled full time in an accredited U.S. dental school and fulfill the qualifications of the specific branch. For more information contact the individual branches of service:

- Army Dental Corps: www.goarmy.com/amedd/dental/
- Navy Dental Corps: www.navy.com/healthcareopportunities/dentalcorps/
- Air Force: www.airforce.com/opportunities/healthcare/careers/dentistry/

Indian Health Service Loan Repayment Program

The IHS Loan Repayment Program awards up to \$24,000 in loan repayment for each year of service. A two year service commitment is required. To learn more about the IHS Loan Repayment Program visit www.dental.ihs.gov/.

State Programs

Many states offer loan repayment programs to dentists and dental students who commit to serving in underserved areas in that state. A resource that outlines loan repayment opportunities in each state is available through the ADA Office of Student Affairs. Call 1.800.621.8099 ext. 7470 or e-mail studentaffairs@ada.org to request a free copy.

You can also search for loan repayment opportunities by entering “loan repayment” and your state into a search engine.

Volunteer:

Volunteer with the National Foundation of Dentistry for the Handicapped (NFDH) through their Donated Dental Services (DDS) program. DDS volunteers work with NFDH coordinators to find patients, and then treat those patients in the comfort of the volunteer's own office. Learn more about volunteering with the NFDH and the DDS program at <http://nfdh.org/>.

Give Kids A Smile® (GKAS™) Day is celebrated every year on the first Friday in February. To get involved, contact your local or state dental society to locate a GKAS event in your area. Then visit www.givekidsasmile.ada.org to sign up for your local event.

Get Inspired!

Dental students across the country are putting their knowledge and skills to work in underserved communities. To read about the Access to Care-related activities your peers have participated in, check out these ADA News articles:

[Student-run clinics offer real-world experience](#), ADA News, June 18, 2009

[Volunteer, recruiter and more](#), ADA News, November 20, 2007

[IHS volunteers reap experience](#), ADA News, October 20 2008

[NC Mission of Mercy](#), ADA News, March 20, 2006

Resources

The ADA

- ADA Access to Oral Health Care web page
Contains ADA resources and information on Access to Care activities and issues.
www.ada.org/goto/access
- ADA You & Your Dentist Frequently Asked Questions
Provides information for dental patients on accessing low cost dental care, finding a dentist, and more.
www.ada.org/public/manage/you/faq.asp

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
Provides information on Medicare, Medicaid and CHIP eligibility, coverage and enrollment.
www.cms.hhs.gov/

- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
Provides information and resources on a broad range of national health care issues and topics.
www.hrsa.gov/

Dental Care Delivery Resources

- Safety Net Dental Clinic Manual
An online reference manual for safety net dental clinic development and operations.
www.dentalclinicmanual.com
- Mobile-Portable Dental Manual
A companion to the Safety Net Dental Clinic Manual, this manual focuses on development and operations of mobile-portable dental clinics.
www.mobile-portabledentalmanual.com
- Ohio Dental Safety Net
A comprehensive online portal to tools and information necessary to start and maintain operations in safety net dental clinics.
www.ohiodentalclinics.com/
- Medicaid/SCHIP Dental Association
An association of state and federal Medicaid and SCHIP dental program representatives that develop and promote state and national Medicaid/SCHIP oral health policies and practices.
www.medicaidental.org

Access to Care Organizations

- National Network for Oral Health Access (NNOHA)
A nationwide network of dental providers who care for patients in Migrant, Homeless, and Community Health Centers.
www.nnoha.org
- National Foundation of Dentistry for the Handicapped (NFDH)
A charitable affiliate of the ADA committed to arranging comprehensive dental treatment and long-term preventive services for needy disabled, elderly or medically compromised individuals.
www.nfdh.org
- National Health Law Program (NHeLP)
A national public interest law firm that serves legal services programs, community-based organizations, providers and individuals who work to preserve a health care safety net for uninsured or underinsured low-income people.
www.healthlaw.org
- American Public Human Services Association (APHSA)
A nonprofit, bipartisan organization of state and local human service agencies and public human service program professionals whose mission is to develop and promote policies and practices that improve the nation's health.
www.aphsa.org
- The National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network (3RNet)
A network of not-for-profit organizations that help health professionals find jobs in rural and underserved areas throughout the country.
www.aphsa.org