

# Barriers to Oral Health Care

Patients and providers report encountering various barriers to receiving and providing quality dental care under Medicaid, a joint federal/state program administered by states under broad federal guidelines. Oral health is a cross-cutting priority for CMS, and patients, providers, and state governments all have a role to play in improving oral health.

This visual summarizes interviews with interested parties to better understand experiences of barriers to oral health care.

## GOVERNMENT

### Legislation

States may allocate more funding to expand oral health care benefits.

### Better Funding, Better Coverage

Better reimbursement models, more virtual appointments, and professional opportunities for mid-level providers are possible avenues for increasing access to oral health care.

### Fund Clinics

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) play a vital role in oral health care and use federal funds to sustain services.

HOW CAN WE BUILD A BETTER SYSTEM?

## PATIENTS

### Standardized Patient Records

Improve patient records through policy and standards to make data easily shared between systems.

### Delays in Care

There are more patients than available providers can see quickly, leading to appointment wait times of 6 months or more.

### Missed Appointments

Patients may be unable to attend appointments due to transportation, work, childcare, or provider proximity challenges.

### Rural Area Challenges

Mobile dentistry and state offices with mid-level providers can extend care into rural areas that lack providers.

### Communication Barriers

Patients rely on community based health workers to bridge cultural and language gaps during appointments.

## PROVIDERS

### Capped Coverage

Limited coverage can make oral health care more expensive, causing people with Medicaid more out-of-pocket costs.

### Teledentistry

The COVID-19 Pandemic has led to increased dental care via televisits. However, some people with Medicaid have limited access.

### Provider Participation

Burdensome enrollment, audits, credentialing, low reimbursement, and administrative processes can discourage providers from participating in Medicaid.

### Emergency Pain

Due to lack of timely dental care, patients can end up at Emergency Departments for dental related pain. Trips to the ED can be costly and do not solve the root of the problem.

### Whole Person Health

Better communication between dental and medical providers can lead to good oral health habits and positive overall health outcomes.

