



NONFINANCIAL STRATEGIES TO INCREASE DENTIST PARTICIPATION IN MEDICAID

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Overview

Oral health providers participate in Medicaid at a considerably lower rate than primary care physicians.¹ As a result, many Medicaid beneficiaries are unable to access care.

State Medicaid programs have historically implemented reimbursement rate increases to be competitive with private insurance rates to entice providers to accept Medicaid. However, when rate increases are infeasible, Medicaid administrators must consider nonfinancial strategies to target nonparticipating dentists.

This document summarizes findings from a Medicaid Evidence-based Decisions Project

(MED) report on dentist participation in Medicaid titled *Nonfinancial Strategies to Increase Dentist Participation in Medicaid*.² Center researchers were tasked with identifying existing nonfinancial strategies Medicaid administrators can use to recruit new dentists.

Findings are based on case studies and interviews with Medicaid administrators from 5 states with Medicaid dental programs. We identified 9 types of nonfinancial strategies that state Medicaid programs use to increase dentist participation.

The 9 strategies are described below. Table 1 also has implementation examples for each strategy.

What nonfinancial strategies have worked for dental Medicaid programs?

- **Dentist Outreach and Support:** Dental Medicaid programs have effectively used outreach in the dental community to educate dentists on the importance of providing services through the Medicaid program.
- **Beneficiary Outreach and Care Coordination:** Dental Medicaid programs have built robust beneficiary outreach components that offer care coordination services and use educational campaigns to improve the patient and dental office experience.
- **Administrative Streamlining:** Some states have simplified provider enrollment, claims submission, or preauthorizations to ease the administrative burden on dentists and their staff.
- **Managed Care and Contracting Strategies:** Medicaid states that use managed care have been able to leverage their contracts to help recruit new dentists.
- **Stakeholder Partnerships and Collaborations:** Partnerships offer an opportunity to promote a state's dental Medicaid program and target new dentists in the state's dental community.
- **Continuing Education and Training:** States have deliberately woven educational or training opportunities into their dental programs as a way of enticing new providers to join.
- **Population-based Program Design:** State Medicaid programs seek to target new providers by focusing on their interest in at-risk populations.
- **Program Evaluation and Evidence:** Dental Medicaid programs perform routine evaluation and performance monitoring activities for provider participation and dental care access.
- **Workforce-based Strategies:** Medicaid programs have tried to address provider shortages by creating workforce-based solutions that expand the availability and capacity of alternative oral health provider types.



Table 1. Nonfinancial Strategies to Increase Dentist Participation in Medicaid

Strategy Area	Description	Strategy Examples
Dentist Outreach and Support	The state Medicaid agency or the agency's contracted administrative services organization conducts direct outreach to dentists to build relationships and increase participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct in-person recruitment visits to nonparticipating dentists. • Conduct routine in-person office visits to support existing Medicaid dentists. • Mail materials to nonparticipating dentists about the program. • Solicit feedback from nonparticipating dentists. • Provide assistance with provider registration and enrollment. • Offer support to dentists for common issues such as administrative barriers (e.g., prior authorizations). • Offer support through text message campaigns for patient appointment follow-ups and reminders. • Offer client outreach materials to dentists on request. • Provide web-based tools to help dentists access information. • Provide dedicated customer support for dentists.
Beneficiary Outreach and Care Coordination	The state Medicaid agency or the agency's contracted entities conduct direct outreach to Medicaid beneficiaries and assist in care coordination activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send reminder postcards, letters, or text messages to beneficiaries about appointments or program information. • Coordinate care to alleviate appointment barriers for beneficiaries (e.g., appointment scheduling, transportation). • Provide customer support representatives to assist with oral health education and program promotion.
Administrative Streamlining	The state Medicaid agency has made administrative changes to the dental program that have streamlined and simplified processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a dental carve-out to administer dental benefit. • Exempt certain services from prior authorization requirements. • Simplify and streamline the process for submission of prior authorizations or claims. • Streamline provider registration and enrollment by creating online applications or tools. • Reduce the turnaround time for reimbursement, prior authorization approval, and provider enrollment. • Create a statewide credentialing system to navigate varying health plan standards.
Managed Care and Contracting Strategies	The state Medicaid agency uses contract-based strategies with its contracted entities to ensure adequate networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish minimum network access standards in contract with MCOs (e.g., time and distance, appointment availability standards). • Require MCOs to conduct routine network access monitoring. • Require MCOs to conduct dentist outreach and recruitment in the event of noncompliance with network standards. • Require targeted dentist outreach activities in underserved areas through contracts with ASO, DBA, or MCO.



Strategy Area	Description	Strategy Examples
Stakeholder Partnerships and Collaboration	The state Medicaid agency works closely with oral health stakeholders, educational institutions, and industry groups to recruit new dentists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish research or educational partnerships with dental schools at public universities. • Recruit graduating dentists or other oral health professionals at dental or other professional schools. • Assist graduating oral health professionals with Medicaid registration and enrollment. • Establish medical-dental collaborations with primary care clinicians for oral health services and promotion. • Leverage relationships with public health or Medicaid agencies on dental program promotion activities. • Establish a statewide dental advisory or action committee comprised of engaged dentists. • Attend meetings convened by oral health professional and advocacy groups. • Actively recruit new dentists through oral health professional and advocacy group networks. • Conduct stakeholder surveys on issues of importance to the dental community. • Create “dental champion” roles for oral health advocates in the dental community to promote dental program. • Incorporate feedback from the dental community into the design of dental program recruitment initiatives.

Strategy Area	Description	Strategy Examples
Continuing Education and Training	The dental Medicaid program includes opportunities for continuing education or specialized training for participating dentists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer training for participating dentists to treat special populations. • Offer routine professional webinars on program-relevant topics. • Provide CEU credits for program-specific training.
Population-based Program Design	The dental Medicaid program targets dentists with interest in at-risk populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design dental program with a focus on children or other vulnerable population to attract concerned dentists. • Recruit “cross-over” dentists from pediatric dental program to treat other Medicaid populations.
Program Evaluation and Evidence	The state Medicaid agency conducts regular evaluations of the dental program’s performance to ensure that dentist participation rates are stable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey participating and nonparticipating dentists about best practices and program satisfaction. • Conduct routine monitoring of dentist participation. • Conduct routine quality improvement projects on existing dentist recruitment strategies. • Develop and evaluate pilot programs that test ways to increase dentist participation. • Furnish and disseminate reports detailing evaluation findings and program successes. • Share findings and evaluations with other state programs.
Workforce-based Strategies	The state Medicaid agency has developed workforce-based strategies to increase the availability of alternative provider types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in oral health integration efforts to expand the oral health capacity of primary care clinicians. • Support the creation of nondentist oral health provider positions to supplement care for preventive dental services. • Develop remote supervision programs for nondentist providers or primary care clinicians to perform preventive care, particularly in underserved settings. • Develop licensure and credentialing reciprocity programs for out-of-state and border dentists.

Abbreviations. MCO: managed care organization; ASO: administrative services only; DBA: dental benefits administrator; CEU: continuing education unit.

References

1. American Dental Association. Medicaid fee-for-service (FFS) reimbursement and provider participation for dentists and physicians in every state. 2017; https://www.ada.org/~/media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/Files/HPIgraphic_0417_1. Accessed September 19, 2019.
2. Taylor S, Thielke A, King V. *Nonfinancial strategies to increase dentist participation in Medicaid*. Portland, OR: Center for Evidence-based Policy, Oregon Health & Science University; 2019.



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