

Addressing the crisis in dental care through ONECare MN

Issues:

- Access to dental care remains a major problem, especially in Greater Minnesota. Without access to care provided by dental professionals, many Minnesotans seek treatment for dental issues in emergency rooms and manage dental pain with prescription drugs without resolving the underlying issues.
- More dental coverage has not translated into better access to dental benefits, particularly for people enrolled in MinnesotaCare and Medical Assistance, Minnesota's Medicaid program. More than 60 percent of children in Medical Assistance did not see a dentist in 2016 or 2017, giving Minnesota one of the nation's worst rankings for children's dental access.
- Many Minnesotans go years without seeing a dentist because they can't get an appointment or have to travel too far.
- Low reimbursement rates for dental care mean many dental clinics can't afford to serve state health care programs. The rate structure has become too complex and uneven, discouraging providers from serving state patients. Recent rate increases went disproportionately to providers already serving state health care program enrollees. Many of these providers were already at or beyond capacity.
- The department's studies in 2014 and 2015 found that administrative complexity and low reimbursement rates discouraged dentists from serving state program enrollees. The Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor also identified these issues as potential barriers.

Proposal:

- Governor Tim Walz proposes creating a common administrative structure for dental services across health care programs. The state will use a competitive process to choose up to two vendors to manage dental care for Medical Assistance, MinnesotaCare and buy-in products.
- The governor's proposal creates more equitable payment rates for dentists by raising rates 54 percent for adult dental care and 24 percent for children's dental care.

Benefits:

- Makes dental care more accessible to people in their communities. Strengthens communities by helping reduce inequities across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups.
- Creates an equitable rate structure that pays all dentists the same rates for the same services. Helps dental practices statewide, including in rural areas, serve all people in their communities.

- Reduces the distances people served by state health care programs must travel to receive dental care. In 2016, nearly 30,000 people in state programs drove more than 70 miles to see a dentist.
- Increases efficiencies for dental providers. The common administrative structure establishes a simpler model for dental benefits across Medical Assistance, MinnesotaCare and buy-in products, reducing the burden and costs associated with multiple payers.
- Lowers the state's cost to administer the dental program through a common administrative structure.

Related information:

- Revised Governor's Budget Recommendations for FY 2020-21, Pages 22 to 28:
<https://mn.gov/mmb-stat/documents/budget/2020-21-biennial-budget-books/governors-revised-march/human-services.pdf>

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