

# 2010

# MICHIGAN ORAL HEALTH COALITION

# Policy Statement

## Medicaid: Adult Dental Coverage

### FACTS

- On July 1, 2009, the Medicaid adult dental benefit was eliminated by Executive Order. Medicaid currently covers only emergency dental services for adults, such as extraction of infected teeth, and then only for conditions that threaten the health of the person.
- Those without dental insurance are often forced to use the hospital emergency room for otherwise avoidable dental health issues.
- Pain from toothaches represents a significant public health problem affecting approximately 22 million adults during any six-month period in the United States.
- Medicaid eligible adults must pay out-of-pocket for dental care or ignore their dental needs.

### About Us

Since 2004, the Michigan Oral Health Coalition has been a leader in the oral health access movement in Michigan. With more than 140 members--consumers, dentists, hygienists and dental assistants as well as universities, community health centers, dental benefit providers, professional associations and local health departments—we work together to improve the oral health of Michigan's residents.



### RECOMMENDATION

The Michigan Oral Health Coalition requests that Michigan's most vulnerable—persons with disabilities; the elderly; the highly impoverished; and poverty-stricken pregnant mothers—receive an annual maximum Medicaid adult dental benefit of \$600. This benefit would provide Michigan's most vulnerable adults with basic oral health care.

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

- The estimated cost for this benefit is approximately \$4 million, which would bring in \$10.8 million in federal match funding.
- Employed adults lose more than 164 million work hours each year due to dental disease, its associated pain, or dental visits.
- Evidence suggests that some employers are less likely to hire individuals whose appearance is affected by dental disease or disorders.
- The Institute of Medicine estimates that \$4 billion a year is saved through preventive dentistry.
- For every dollar Michigan invests in its Medicaid program in FY 2010, the state receives an additional \$2.74 from the federal government. Conversely, if the state government cuts \$100 million from Medicaid, it loses an additional \$274 million in matching funds.

### OVERALL HEALTH IMPACT

- Twenty-seven percent of those 35 to 44 years old and 30% of those 65 years and older have untreated tooth decay.
- Oral infections have been associated with diabetes, heart disease/stroke, pre-term birth and low birth weight babies.
- Cancer in the oral cavity or pharynx accounts for approximately 2.4% of all cancers. If caught early, an individual's five-year survival rate from these types of cancers can improve by as much as 29%.
- Oral health affects diet, nutrition, sleep, psychological status, social interaction and work.
- A number of medications, including antidepressants and drugs used to treat epilepsy or other neurological disorders, can cause serious oral side effects.