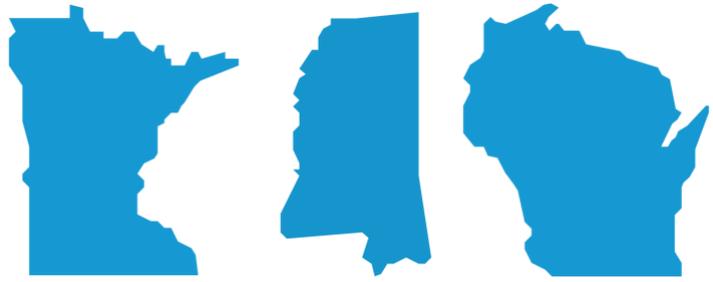


DENTAL MEDICAID RATES BOOSTED IN THREE STATES: MINNESOTA, MISSISSIPPI, AND WISCONSIN



As reported by Minnesota Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
Public Policy Advocate Dr. Elise Sarvas



The Minnesota legislature passed an omnibus health and human services bill that was signed by the Governor on June 29, 2021.¹ Among other provisions, it is fantastic news that Medicaid dental reimbursement rates will increase by 98% starting in January 2022! Additionally, the Critical Access Dollars (20% increase) was preserved (university-owned dental clinics receive these dollars).

This is a *once in a generation reimbursement rate* increase and will affect most practitioners in the state who are not state-operated dental clinics, federally qualified health centers, rural health centers, or Indian health services which fall under a different fee schedule.

In addition to the rate increase the bill also sets establishes a process to start measuring dental utilization and create benchmarks for different geographical areas. This means that if a county is not getting a certain percentage of the people in their area on public insurance at least one dental visit a year, they will need to study the issue and fix it. There are also measures to fund telehealth services and tobacco prevention and cessation.

Many thanks go to Dr. Jim Nickman, past-president of the AAPD, current president of the Minnesota Dental Association (MDA), and adjunct University of Minnesota dental faculty member for his work with the MDA in getting this passed. Dr. Nickman indicates that key factors for this success were: a) a bold proposal from DHS to rebase the system to more contemporary rates; b) an interested House chair to drive the issue, c) and a united front of private and non-profit providers from throughout the state.

The MDA provided the following summary of the Medicaid dental provisions:

- “The bill creates performance benchmarks to improve dental utilization for Managed Care and county-based purchasing plans. If the health plans do not meet the benchmarks established by the Minn. Department of Health, they will be required to submit a corrective action plan. If in 2024 plans in aggregate are continuing to fail to meet the performance benchmarks, the state will enter into an agreement with a single administrator to begin delivering services beginning in 2026.
- To better understand dental utilization in the state, the commissioner of DHS will submit a report to legislators on dental utilization.

¹ http://wdoc.house.leg.state.mn.us/leg/LS92/1_2021/HF0033.2.pdf

- The legislation requires a uniform dental credentialing process beginning January 1, 2022.
- The legislation does eliminate the rural, children, and community clinic add-on and reinvests those dollars into an across-the-board rate increase.
- The legislation expands Medicaid to cover nonsurgical treatment for periodontal disease for adults including scaling and root planing once every two years for each quadrant, and routine periodontal maintenance procedures.
- Each year the commissioner of DHS will submit a report to legislators on provider reimbursement rates, in order to improve transparency.
- The legislation establishes a **dental home advisory committee** that will require DSAC (dental services advisory committee), in collaboration with specific stakeholders, to design a dental home demonstration project and present the recommendations by February 1, 2022. The advisory committee will include a representative from the Minnesota Dental Association and two private practice dentists.
- The commissioner of DHS shall present recommendations on dental rate rebasing to legislators by February 1, 2022. The report must include recommendations on the frequency of rebasing, whether it should incorporate an inflation factor, and other factors relevant to ensuring access to dental care.
- The commissioner of DHS will review other states that have implemented a carve out model and switched to a single administrator and compare programs.”

**As reported by Mississippi Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
Public Policy Advocate Dr. Neva Eklund**



In 2020, the Mississippi Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (MAPD) engaged a state-level lobbying firm to work on Medicaid issues before the state legislature and general anesthesia issues before the state dental board. Typically, in every third Mississippi legislative session Medicaid is up for reauthorization. MAPD’s focus was on increased dental fees and greater accountability for managed care organizations (MCOs). In 2021 progress was made via changes the legislature made to remove the automatic 5% administrative withholding on reimbursement rates, and approve a 5% increase in preventive and diagnostic fees for each fiscal year 2022, 2023, and 2024. MAPD also assisted the Mississippi dental board in re-vamping their anesthesia regulation to ensure safer measures are in place for Mississippi children under anesthesia during dental procedures.

MAPD President Dr. Tiffany Green sent the following message to chapter members:

“Mississippi Academy of Pediatric Dentistry owes a huge thank you to Clare Hester, Erin Nail and the entire team at Capitol Resources, LLC. I am a firm believer that NONE of the above things would have been accomplished without our partnership. They have led and directed us, fought for our interests and the safety of the children of Mississippi, connected and established valuable relationships with legislators and state agencies, and opened doors and helped us gain respect from Mr. Drew Snyder and the Department of Medicaid. They have kept your leadership informed on almost a daily basis and have advocated for our interests on many late nights at the Capitol when there was no other voice present representing the dentists of Mississippi. This WIN

should validate any questions we as a collective body have ever had on the value and necessity of this partnership!”

The Mississippi Dental Association provided the following details on the legislation (SB 2799) passed in April 2021 that reauthorized the Medicaid program for three years (July 1, 2021 – July 1, 2024):

“This legislation was a collective effort of a coalition of health care providers (including representatives from MDA and MS Academy of Pediatric Dentistry). Our dentist volunteer leaders and lobby team worked really hard to meet with legislators, elected officials and other pertinent leaders to help pass the bill. MDA efforts began last summer, and built up leading into the session. We all owe a special thanks to the dentists who took time to deliver advocacy messages to our leaders when it counted.

The bill does a number of things to impact reimbursement and program management. First, the bill eliminates the 5% administrative fee for dentists who participate in Medicaid. The fee was implemented in the 1990s, so this law reverses a long-time fee for dentists (and other providers too). It also provides for a 5% fee increase for three years for dentists on preventative/diagnostic care. While the increase is a start, we will continue advocating for dentists to be fairly compensated for Medicaid treatment.

The following items in the bill pertain to reimbursement rates:

- Increases dental rates on diagnostic and preventative services each of SFY 2022-2024 by 5% each year.
- Deletes 5% provider withhold (including dentistry) and requirement for the medical care advisory committee to study reimbursement rates.
- Prohibits Medicaid from increasing or decreasing reimbursement rates or limitations on services from the levels in effect on July 1, 2021 unless authorized by the Legislature.

The following provisions apply to Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) who contract with Medicaid on the program:

- If Medicaid reduces rates to providers because projected expenditures exceed appropriation, then Medicaid must accompany any reimbursement reductions with reductions in the MCO profit and administrative fees to the fullest extent allowable
- Prohibits MCOs from implementing more stringent requirement than Medicaid for prior authorization, utilization review, medical services, transportation services and prescription drugs. Also requires the MCOs to submit a report to the Medicaid Chairmen by December 2, 2021 on the status of the processes for these services. Intention is to have alignment and standardization for these processes.
- Requires all MCOs or similar programs to adopt level of care guidelines in determining medical necessity in all utilization management practices including PA, concurrent reviews, retro reviews and payments.
- Authorizes MCO categories of eligibility to only include categories eligible for participation in Medicaid managed care as of 1/1/21 and CHIP waiver in operation as of 1/1/21 and removes the Commission on Expanding Managed Care.
- MCOs required to annually share administrative cost data and number of Mississippi FTEs dedicated to the Mississippi contracts for Medicaid and CHIP with the Medicaid Chairmen.
- More stringent reporting/review/audit requirements on MCOs performed by PEER, State Auditor, Mississippi Insurance Department or an independent third party and publish the results in their entirety on the Division’s website.
- By 12/1/21 MCOs must adopt a standardized and expedited credentialing process; if not, then DOM must do it by July 1, 2022. Provisions for temporary credentialing are provided.

- MCOs must give detailed explanation of reasons for a denial of a procedure that was ordered or requested by a provider as well as provide the name and credentials of the person who denied the coverage. MCOs and Medicaid must also expedite the review and appeals process.
- Legislative intent for DOM to study feasibility of using one vendor for dental benefits.”

**As reported by Wisconsin Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
Public Policy Advocate Dr. Colleen Greene**



The Wisconsin Academy of Pediatric Dentistry is delighted with the first significant Medicaid dental fee increase in 20 years, overall a 40% increase that goes into effect on January 1, 2022. The Wisconsin Dental Association has engaged in proactive and multi-faceted legislative solutions to improve access to care for vulnerable individuals, including taking a neutral position on dental therapy legislation, pushing for expanded function dental auxiliaries and collaborating to set the stage for teledentistry opportunities. Medicaid dental fees were last raised 1% in 2008 and 1% in 2002, so this is a monumental achievement. It is a credit to the decades-long advocacy of dentists, organized dentistry

leaders and staff members as well as collaboration among diverse stakeholders statewide and a bipartisan group of elected officials and lawmakers.

The Wisconsin Dental Association (WDA) issued the following press release on July 8, 2021:

**“Advocacy at work: Gov. Evers signs
monumental dental Medicaid increase into law**

After months of WDA advocacy, Gov. Tony Evers this morning signed into law a 2021-23 state budget that includes a 40% dental Medicaid reimbursement increase. The hike is the largest increase in the state budget, and the largest in recent memory. **It represents an additional \$46 million over the biennium.**

Many thanks to the WDA members who sent over 500 emails to lawmakers in support of dental Medicaid increases and testified at budget hearings as our Madison team continued to engage with legislators, the Department of Health Services and the Governor’s Office. Passage of the 40% increase is a huge victory for the WDA, its members and the patients you serve.

WDA President **Dr. Paula Crum** (Green Bay) issued the following statement shortly after the governor signed the budget:

“On behalf of the 3,100 members of the Wisconsin Dental Association, I would like to extend a sincere thank you to the Legislature and Gov. Evers for including dental Medicaid reimbursement increases in the 2021-23 state budget. Through bipartisan action and support, the Legislature and Governor have taken a strong step forward toward increasing access to care for our state’s most vulnerable populations.

“Today’s action represents the state’s first significant investment in oral health in two decades. Expanding access to oral health is, and should remain, a bipartisan priority. The WDA would like to thank Gov. Evers, Speaker Robin Vos, Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu and Joint Committee on Finance Co-Chairmen Mark Born and Howard Marklein for doing just that.

*“I also want to extend my appreciation to WDA member dentists who sent **over 500 messages** to lawmakers urging them to support increased Medicaid reimbursement.*

Successful advocacy campaigns require engaged and enthusiastic grassroots partners. Today's bill signing is a testament to this.

"We greatly appreciate the increased attention being paid to oral health in Wisconsin. We all agree that getting more people quality oral healthcare will require a multipronged approach, utilizing a variety of solutions. The Wisconsin Dental Association strongly believes increasing reimbursement rates in our state is one of the prongs to do just that. Today is a momentous day, and we look forward to continuing to collaborate to accomplish even more this legislative session."