

# Expanding Access to Oral Health Care Coverage Policy Statement

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Oral health is integral to general health and is essential to the overall health and well-being of all individuals. Consequently, access to oral health care is a matter of importance for all Californians.

The California Dental Association supports the expansion of access to oral health care, including extending systems of oral health care coverage to groups that have traditionally been uninsured and who have been without access to existing public health programs and commercial dental insurance. CDA supports inclusion of oral health care benefits in any basic or essential health care benefit plan, provided such programs incorporate the following general principles:

1. Expansion of oral health care benefits should not be equated with a government-run, single-payer system of coverage for everyone; expanded access for the uninsured should be achieved through a variety of means, and should not prohibit or discourage comprehensive private insurance or payment for care through other resources.
2. Providing comprehensive oral health care coverage to all Californians is a desirable goal, however economic realities in the private sector, and fiscal realities in the public sector, may make establishment of systems to provide comprehensive dental care coverage unfeasible. Given these limitations, systems to expand access to oral health care benefits to the uninsured should also meet the following parameters:
  - A. The integrity of the dentist-patient relationship in determining appropriate treatment approaches must remain paramount.
  - B. The scope of benefits shall adhere to the following priority of treatment objectives:
    1. Relief of pain and treatment of infection.
    2. Prevention of oral diseases.
    3. Elimination of oral diseases that exhibit a worsening prognosis.
    4. Return of oral function.
  - C. The scope of benefits of any dental care program must drive the funding of the program.
  - D. Fair payment to providers must cover the actual cost of treatment and reasonable overhead.
3. Funding for and administration of oral health care should be separate from the administration and funding of the medical side of any system of expanded access to care in order to protect the long-term integrity of the oral health care program.