

# A Decade of Medi-Cal Dental Improvements and Investments

## Rebuilding the Medi-Cal Dental Program has been a core priority for CDA

Medi-Cal’s fee-for-service (FFS) dental program is the largest dental program in the country, **covering dental care for more than 14 million low-income Californians**. The FFS program covers 93% of the Medi-Cal population, with exceptions in Los Angeles, Sacramento and San Mateo counties.

The program has made historic progress over the past decade, dramatically **expanding provider participation and increasing access to care** through Proposition 56, improved reimbursement rates, enhanced federal funding, restored benefits and other programmatic changes.

### 2009

Most of the Medi-Cal adult dental benefits were eliminated due to the state’s budget deficit. Children’s services, as required by federal law, continued.

### 2014

State budget restores many adult dental services eliminated in 2009, including basic prevention, diagnostic, restorative procedures like fillings, stainless steel crowns, and full dentures.

### 2016

Passage of Proposition 56, increased access to health care for Medi-Cal beneficiaries through 40% reimbursement rate increases as well as new dental/physician student loan repayment funding.

### 2016-2021

The Dental Transformation Initiative was a pilot program using federal funding for innovative payment models and value-based care, to increase preventive dental services for children, prevent and treat more early childhood caries (cavities), and increase continuity of care for children.

This initiative included coverage for:



Silver diamine fluoride – a topical application that can treat and prevent cavities in vulnerable populations including young children, the elderly and persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities.



Caries (cavity) risk assessment, which allows a dentist to assess and manage caries risk and emphasizes preventive services in lieu of more invasive and costly procedures for very young children.



Extended time to render dental services to patients with special health needs.

### 2017

State budget restored coverage starting in 2018 for the remaining adult services that were previously eliminated, including laboratory crowns for front teeth, root canals on back teeth, periodontal care (gum disease) and partial dentures.

### 2022

The CA Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) program expanded and made permanent in statute the most successful elements of the Dental Transformation Initiative. The CA state budget also expanded dental coverage again, adding laboratory processed crowns for adults.