

Wisconsin Dental Association: Medicaid dental pilot demonstrates initial success

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MADISON, WIS. – *Dr. Patrick Tepe, a general dentist practicing in Verona and president of the Wisconsin Dental Association, today issued the following statement after release Wednesday of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute's evaluation of the first year of the state's four-county Medicaid dental pilot program:*

“After just one year of implementation, there are clear signs that this program is having a positive, measurable effect on increasing access to care for Wisconsin children on Medicaid. There are several key takeaways from the report, including:

- A 4 percent increase in the number of children receiving dental services, from 40 percent to 44 percent;
- A 5 percent increase in the number of adults receiving dental services, from 25 percent to 30 percent;
- A 33 percent increase in the number of dentists enrolled as Medicaid providers in the pilot counties; and
- 35 percent of the new enrollees served over 100 Medicaid patients.

“The WDA is particularly pleased to see a number of constructive suggestions from the evaluation, including increased outreach to oral health providers and a cost-effectiveness analysis after a longer period of time has passed.

“We are gratified, but not surprised by, the results of the pilot report. This evaluation is proof that the state is starting to see a positive return on its investment in oral health. Adequately compensating providers allows them to increase their ability to see Medicaid patients; in fact, in many cases, adequate compensation makes it feasible for them to see this underserved population for the first time. By putting its money where its mouth is, the state has increased access measurably.

“Expansion of this pilot program is a top priority for the WDA. Given the impressive results of this independent evaluation, legislators should support its expansion and continue the proven increases in access demonstrated by this report.”