



Connecticut Oral Health Coalition

Members:

Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

Community Health Center, Inc.

Connecticut AIDS Resource Coalition

Connecticut Appleseed

Connecticut Dental Assistants Association

Connecticut Association of School-Based Health Centers

Connecticut Dental Hygienists' Association

Connecticut Oral Health Initiative

Connecticut Society of Pediatric Dentists

Connecticut State Dental Association

Connecticut Voices for Children

Greater Hartford Legal Aid

Regional Oral Health Collaboratives:

- Bridgeport
- Danbury
- New Britain
- New Haven
- Norwalk
- Stamford
- Waterbury

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June 18, 2009

An open letter to Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell

Dear Governor Rell,

On behalf of 2,335 people in 154 towns across the state, enclosed are postcards they have signed asking you and members of the Connecticut General Assembly to protect dental care as part of our basic healthcare safety net for people in Medicaid. The Connecticut Oral Health Coalition partner organizations and these individuals respectfully request that you reconsider your proposal to eliminate routine dental care for our adult neighbors who are enrolled in Medicaid (HUSKY, SAGA and Medicaid/Title XIX) as well as prior authorization requirements that would be burdensome and might discourage dental providers from serving Medicaid participants.

Here are some of the reasons why people feel so strongly about protecting regular dental care for adults in Medicaid. We hope you will consider the potential costs of eliminating this care:

- 1) An increase in painful, dangerous and expensive systemic and other health problems related to and resulting from unchecked problems such as oral cancers and dental disease.
- 2) More emergency room visits for dental problems. These cost ten times more than prior in-office care and usually recur since there is no ER treatment available for underlying oral health issues.
- 3) Worsening nutrition, particularly among the elderly and disabled.
- 4) Increased transmission of the bacteria that causes dental caries from parents to their newborns and young children. This is considered an infectious disease.
- 5) Children of parents in poor dental health have more dental problems as well. Dental pain is a leading reason for school absence.

It is difficult for people who enjoy good oral health and have regular access to dental care to understand the severity of problems that can result from dental disease and lack of regular exams and care. Oral health is essential for healthy day-to-day functioning and is key to learning and employability – both so important in our current recession.

State budget reductions should first and foremost do no health harm. Other states that have eliminated adult dental coverage in Medicaid have experienced a resulting increase in emergency room visits and negative impacts on the community healthcare infrastructure. Others are considering increasing dental coverage because the science shows such clear benefits from good oral health.

On behalf of all the Coalition partners listed here, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Howard I. Mark, D.M.D.

President, Connecticut Oral Health Initiative (on behalf of the Coalition members)

cc: Members, Connecticut General Assembly