



ADVOCACY ASSEMBLY

Oral Health on the 2024 Ballot

Election Engagement Toolkit

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Here is a link to slides from OPEN’s Advocacy Assembly on July 17 on this toolkit](#)

[Here is a link to slides from OPENs Advocacy Assembly on July 17 on Poll Results](#)

- OVERVIEW..... 2**
- POLL RESULTS: STRONG SUPPORT FOR DENTAL COVERAGE..... 3**
- EMAIL YOUR CANDIDATES..... 5**
 - Email US Senate and US House of Representatives Candidates..... 5
 - Email Presidential Candidates..... 6
- POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA..... 8**
- PUT OUT A PRESS RELEASE..... 11**
- ASK A QUESTION AT CANDIDATES’ EVENTS..... 11**
- SPREAD THE WORD..... 12**

OVERVIEW

Take action with the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN) to raise the profile of oral health as a key issue throughout the election season. Use this toolkit to approach candidates, brief them on the issues, and encourage them to talk about it during the campaign.

What do we want to accomplish?

- Raise the profile of oral health in the context of the 2024 election season.
- Help candidates understand the need to address oral health in their commitments to health care.
- Lay the groundwork for new champions in Congress.

What issues will we focus on?

- Adding dental coverage in Medicare
- Strengthening dental coverage in Medicaid
- Extending dental coverage to all veterans

How to “Take Action.” Pick one or several of the following activities:

- Email your US Senate, US House of Representatives, and Presidential candidates
- Post on social media
- Put out a press release
- Ask a question at candidates’ events
- Spread the word

When should I “Take Action”?

- **Week of August 5th** - During the Congressional recess, candidates are more likely to hit the campaign trail, host events, and engage on social media.
- You can use this toolkit throughout the election season. However, there are a few key dates that are more strategic. We will alert you as opportunities arise.

What do I do after I “Take Action”?

- [Log your interaction](#) to help us keep track of your activities so we can measure our collective impact. Ultimately, we need to know the number of candidates you engaged + which actions you completed.

Have any questions? We’re here to help!

- **Office Hours:** [Sign up for a 15-min. slot the week of August 5th.](#)
- Bianca Rogers: brogers@carequest.org
- Melissa Burroughs: mburroughs@carequest.org
- Ami Sanchez: asanchez@carequest.org

POLL RESULTS: STRONG SUPPORT FOR DENTAL COVERAGE

CareQuest Institute for Oral Health® / Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN) commissioned a recent poll of 1,000 national registered voters which found both Democrat and Republican voters overwhelmingly support including dental care coverage in Medicare, Medicaid, and veterans' benefits. [Link to Press Release.](#)

Use the details below to inform your activities as you take action during the election season.

Key Findings.

- Nine out of ten voters (92%) support including a dental benefit in Medicare
- Three out of four voters (74%) support offering adult dental coverage under Medicaid
 - 72% of voters support mandating all states to cover Medicaid adult dental benefits
- Nine out of ten voters (91%) support providing dental coverage for more veterans
 - Two-thirds of voters (67%) support expanding dental coverage to all veterans

Informational one-pagers.

- [Voters are ready for Medicare Dental](#)
- [Voters want Medicaid Adult Dental Coverage](#)
- [Voters Demand Dental Coverage for Veterans](#)

Medicare Dental messages that resonate with voters, by ranking.

Biden/Clinton Voters from 2016 + 2020	Trump Voters from 2016 + 2020	Works well with both.
1. No one in this country should have to choose between getting the oral health care they need and putting food on the table. That's why Medicare should cover dental.	1. Workers pay into Medicare their whole working lives. They deserve full coverage including dental coverage.	Workers pay into Medicare their whole working lives. They deserve full coverage including dental coverage.
2. All of us should have the opportunity to lead a healthy life no matter our race, age or gender. That includes adding dental coverage to Medicare.	2. Covering every part of the body except the mouth just doesn't make sense. Medicare should include dental coverage.	Dental care is the number one medical service Americans skip due to its high cost. That's why we need Medicare to cover it.

<p>3. Workers pay into Medicare their whole working lives. They deserve full coverage including dental coverage.</p>	<p>3. Dental care is the number one medical service Americans skip due to its high cost. That's why we need Medicare to cover it.</p>	<p>No one in this country should have to choose between getting the oral health care they need and putting food on the table. That's why Medicare should cover dental.</p>
<p>4. Dental care is the number one medical service Americans skip due to its high cost. That's why we need Medicare to cover it.</p>	<p>4. No one in this country should have to choose between getting the oral health care they need and putting food on the table. That's why Medicare should cover dental.</p>	

EMAIL YOUR CANDIDATES

One of the best ways to contact your candidates is via email. We want to know where candidates stand on our issues. Follow these steps to share information on the importance of oral health and request a short meeting with your candidates.

Email US Senate and US House of Representatives Candidates.

→ Find your candidates' campaign contact information.

- [Sample Ballot Lookup](#) on Ballotpedia offers information on candidates. Enter your address to find links to social media for candidates & their campaign websites.
 - Look for a contact email or form or phone number for the campaign office.
 - This [step-by-step guide includes screenshots](#) to help you navigate Ballotpedia to find the information you seek.
 - TIP: If your candidate is a sitting Member of Congress and you have an established contact in their office (like from participating in past OPEN Hill Days), feel free to email your contact directly.

→ Copy + paste this Email Template: Customize as needed.

Subject: Oral Health is Important — Voters Agree

Dear [CANDIDATE],

As your constituent, I am writing to you today because I have been following your campaign and appreciate [the attention you have given to health care / your support for _____ / *personalize as possible*]. I would like to learn more about your position on specific health issues — oral health coverage for Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, and our veterans.

I represent [name of your organization] as well as the Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN), a national network of providers, public health activists, and grassroots organizers working to ensure that all of our communities can thrive without being held back by oral health problems.

Nine out of 10 American voters now favor adding a dental benefit to Medicare, and improving oral health coverage for veterans and in Medicaid is nearly as popular. The support is deep and broad. Adding oral health coverage to Medicare is now ranked among the most important health care issues for candidates to address in 2024, on par with abortion. It has extremely strong support from voters of all political ideologies, with 85% of former Donald Trump voters supporting the policy and nearly universal support from former Joe Biden/Hillary Clinton voters.

Created nearly 60 years ago, Medicare does not cover most oral health procedures, despite its critical importance to our health as we age. This just doesn't make sense. Workers pay into Medicare their whole working lives. They deserve full health coverage, including dental.

Furthermore, not all veterans who receive medical care through the VA are also eligible for dental coverage through the VA, even though **91% of voters support providing oral health care for more veterans**. Additionally, not all states offer comprehensive dental coverage for adults under Medicaid. No one in this country should have to choose between getting the oral health care they need and putting food on the table. And voters agree – **74% support offering adult dental benefits in Medicaid**.

These informational one-pagers provide further details:

- [Voters are ready for Medicare Dental](#)
- [Voters want Medicaid Adult Dental Coverage](#)
- [Voters Demand Dental Coverage for Veterans](#)

[option to insert additional state context here- eg these issues are particularly important in X state, with XX state specific data]

So, my three questions to you are simple:

- **Will you join the growing bipartisan movement to add dental coverage to Medicare?**
- **Do you support all veterans getting oral health care through the VA?**
- **Do you agree with voters that support strengthening adult dental coverage in Medicaid?**

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical matter. I look forward to your response, and I would welcome a short meeting with [the candidate] or their staff member overseeing health policy.

Best regards,

[Your Full Name]

[Your Organization/Title]

[Your Contact Information]

Email Presidential Candidates.

- Visit our [Take Action Center](#) to enter your address and email the Presidential candidates directly.

Prepare for your meeting. If a candidate's office offers you a meeting and you would like our support to prepare, reach out!

Know your issues. Review the policy priorities you want to raise with candidates.

Know your audience. Establishing a relationship with candidates and their teams is a long-term investment. Getting to know them - both as a politician and a person - is key to creating a collaborative relationship. Research them thoroughly before your meeting, including any public positions or votes on issues you plan to raise. Also be sure you know what office they are running for, if you are a constituent, and what their key priorities are.

Determine your objectives. What are you asking the candidate to do? What are some concrete steps you'd like them to take or metrics you want them to meet? Outline your asks for the meeting ahead of time and make sure that if you are doing this with a team, you are all aligned on how to present information to the candidate.

Organize materials to leave behind. Candidates and their teams are pressed for time and meet with multiple groups every day. Provide them with the informational one-pagers below (and any additional materials you want to share from your organization) and make sure to leave behind your contact information for any follow up.

- [Voters are ready for Medicare Dental](#)
- [Voters want Medicaid Adult Dental Coverage](#)
- [Voters Demand Dental Coverage for Veterans](#)

POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Raise the profile of oral health by posting messages on X, formerly Twitter, and Facebook. You can engage your candidate by tagging them in the post directly.

- Find your candidates' **campaign** handles on X. When you post, you may tag their handle to engage them directly. For example, add “@AOC” **at the end of your post** to tag.
 - TIP: For those who are currently in office, their official account lists them as ‘Rep. XX’ or ‘Senator XX’

✓ **THIS ONE!**



X NOT THIS ONE



Use these Hashtags:

#oralhealthvotes and **#MouthsinMedicare**

Add relevant links as needed:

Take Action webpage: <https://ow.ly/B25M50SCiUY>

Medicare Dental one-pager: <https://bit.ly/4cKJLzY>

Medicaid Adult Dental one-pager: <https://bit.ly/3W5wYkM>

Veterans' Dental one-pager: <https://bit.ly/3W5hw81>

→ [Link to high quality graphics for X and Facebook.](#)

Sample Posts for X, formerly Twitter. Remember, the character limit is 280 on X posts. Tag candidates' handles at the end of your post to engage them directly.

- 92% of voters support adding dental benefits to Medicare. Do you think Medicare should cover our whole body, including our mouth? Ask candidates now!
- 4 out of 5 Trump voters (2016 & 2020) support adding dental benefits to Medicare. Support among Clinton/Biden voters is even higher. Should Medicare cover our whole body, including our mouth? Ask candidates now!
- 91% of voters want more veterans to get the oral health coverage their service earned. Should the VA offer dental benefits to those it serves? Ask candidates now!
- 74% of voters support offering dental coverage for adults under Medicaid. Should Medicaid cover oral health for parents and grandparents, not just kids? Ask candidates now!

- Trump and Biden voters agree: Medicare should cover oral health. Should Medicare cover our whole body, including our mouth? Ask candidates now!
- Workers pay into Medicare their whole working lives. They deserve full health coverage including dental coverage. Should Medicare cover our whole body, including our mouth? Ask candidates now!
- No one in this country should have to choose between getting the oral health care they need and putting food on the table. That's why Medicare should cover dental. Do you agree? Ask candidates now!
- Medicaid is a vital source of health insurance for millions of families but many states do not offer adequate dental coverage. Do you support making dental coverage a guaranteed service in Medicaid so families can receive the care they need to work, eat and stay healthy? Ask candidates now!
- Our veterans served their country completely; they deserve complete health coverage – including oral health. Should the VA stop denying some veterans oral health benefits? Ask candidates now!
- Six out of 10 voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports adding dental coverage to Medicare. Ask candidates this summer: Can we count on you?
- Two-thirds of voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports expanding dental benefits to military veterans. Ask candidates this summer: Can we count on you?

Sample Posts for Facebook. Share poll results & encourage your audiences to take action.

- American voters are ready for Medicare dental: 92% now favor adding a dental benefit to Medicare. Ask candidates this summer if they agree: Should Medicare cover our whole body, including our mouth? Learn more and take action: <https://ow.ly/B25M50SCiUY>
- Four out of five voters who voted for Trump in both 2016 and 2020 support adding a dental benefit to Medicare. Support among former Clinton/Biden voters is even higher. Ask candidates this summer if they agree: Should Medicare cover our whole body, including our mouth? Learn more and take action: <https://ow.ly/B25M50SCiUY>
- Nine out of 10 voters want more veterans to get the oral health coverage their service earned them. Ask candidates this summer if they agree: Should the VA offer dental benefits to those it serves? Learn more and take action: <https://ow.ly/B25M50SCiUY>
- Three out of four voters now support offering adults dental coverage under Medicaid. Currently, Medicaid dental coverage is mandated for children, but not adults. Ask candidates their opinion this summer: Should Medicaid cover oral health for parents and grandparents, and not just the children they care for? Learn more and take action: <https://ow.ly/B25M50SCiUY>
- Workers pay into Medicare their whole working lives. They deserve full health coverage including dental coverage. Ask candidates this summer if they agree: Should Medicare

cover our whole body, including our mouth? Learn more and take action:
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- No one in this country should have to choose between getting the oral health care they need and putting food on the table. That's why Medicare should cover dental. Ask candidates this summer if they agree: Should Medicare cover our whole body, including our mouth? Learn more and take action: <https://ow.ly/B25M50SCiUY>
- Our veterans served their country completely; they deserve complete health coverage – including oral health. Ask candidates this summer if they agree: Should the VA stop denying some veterans oral health benefits? Learn more and take action: <https://ow.ly/B25M50SCiUY>

PUT OUT A PRESS RELEASE

Press releases often lead to candidates being asked about their position on key issues by the media, and can elevate the profile of your organization too.

Template Press Release:

- We have developed two templates for you to choose from. One uses language that messages well with a progressive leaning audience and the other with a conservative leaning audience. Select what works best for your organization.
- TIP: Remember to tailor the message to share local information/data and is relevant to the audience in your community. However, please keep poll data as is.
 - [Progressive Frame - Press Release Template](#)
 - [Conservative Frame - Press Release Template](#)

ASK A QUESTION AT CANDIDATES' EVENTS

We want to know where candidates stand on oral health policies. Keep our issues front and center by attending a candidate event and most importantly, ask specific oral health questions.

Find candidate events.

- Upcoming campaign events are usually listed on a candidate's website or social media. Look up your candidate's website/social media accounts using a simple Google search, or use [Ballotpedia](#). TIP: If you subscribe to their newsletter, you are typically the first to receive information about their upcoming events directly to your inbox.
- Note, sometimes you are able to submit your question in advance when RSVPing for an event.

Ask oral health specific questions:

- Thousands of adults aged 65+ in [your state] paid into Medicare their whole working lives and yet it completely leaves out the mouth. It's no surprise that nine out of ten voters want to see this problem fixed. **Do you support including dental coverage in Medicare for our nation's older adults and individuals with disabilities?**
- Currently, not all veterans who receive medical care through the VA are also eligible for dental coverage through the VA. They served our country completely; they deserve complete coverage. **Do you support all veterans getting oral health care through the VA?**
- Medicaid is a vital source of health insurance for millions of children, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and adults, but many states do not include adequate dental coverage in their programs. Three-fourths of voters support strengthening Medicaid by offering adult dental coverage in each state. **Do you agree with voters?**

SPREAD THE WORD

Share this toolkit with your network to spread the word and amplify our impact! Feel free to add a blurb in your newsletter, email to relevant listservs, and/or post on LinkedIn, etc.

Copy + paste the template below. Customize, as needed.

Subject/Title: Take Action: Voters are ready for dental coverage and candidates should know.

Hello [NAME OR GROUP NAME OR ADVOCATES],

[I'm writing to share the results of] a [recent poll](#) that found an overwhelming majority of voters across the political spectrum support dental coverage in Medicare, Medicaid, and veterans' benefits. [Optional: ADD SOMETHING ABOUT WHY THIS MATTERS/RELATES TO THIS PERSON/GROUP'S FOCUS, MISSION, POPULATION SERVED].

This election season, [my organization is/I am] reaching out to candidates to raise the profile of oral health as a key issue. The Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN) has developed an advocacy toolkit to make outreach easy. You can access the toolkit here: <https://carequest.quorum.us/open/>

Our goal is simple: We want as many Congressional candidates as possible talking about dental coverage. Now is our time to act! Will you join us?