

Pennsylvania State of the State 2024

Dental Insurance Coverage and Oral Health



CareQuest Institute for Oral Health's annual State of Oral Health Equity in America survey asked over 9,000 adults about visiting a dentist and about dental benefits included in Medicaid and Medicare. Overall, 94% of surveyed adults agree or strongly agree that Medicare should cover dental care, and 93% agree or strongly agree that Medicaid in their state should cover dental care.

Pennsylvanians Visiting the Dentist

- In 2024, **67%** of adults in Pennsylvania saw a dentist in the past year; **7%** had an oral health problem but did not visit a dentist because of cost.
 - Nationally, 68% of adults saw a dentist in the prior year, and 8% did not visit a dentist for an oral health problem because of cost.
- **Twenty-six percent** of Pennsylvania adults did not have *dental* coverage in 2024, compared to **4%** who did not have *health* insurance. **Three percent** of adults in Pennsylvania visited a hospital emergency department — instead of a dental office — for dental care in 2024, with charges for these visits reaching as much as **\$584 million**.¹
 - Nationally, 26% of adults lacked *dental* coverage in 2024, while 9% lacked *health* insurance. Four percent of adults sought dental care in an emergency department nationally.
- **Thirty-six percent** of adults in Pennsylvania report having at least one chronic health condition in 2024. Poor oral health is linked with chronic health conditions like [diabetes](#), [cardiovascular disease](#), and [dementia](#).
 - Nationally in 2024, 36% of adults reported having at least one chronic health condition.

¹ Annual costs for emergency department visits for dental care are based on cost estimates from CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, [Recent Trends in Hospital ED Visits for Non-Traumatic Dental Conditions](#), Boston, MA: 2022; and US Census Bureau, [State Population by Characteristics: 2020–2023](#), Washington, DC: 2023.

Pennsylvanians' Thoughts on Medicaid and Medicare Dental Coverage

- Pennsylvania's Medicaid program [does include an adult dental benefit](#) in addition to covering dental care for children. **Sixty-six percent** of adults in Pennsylvania say that dental benefits for both adults and children are included in their state's Medicaid program, and **94%** agree or strongly agree that Medicaid in their state should cover dental care.
- Traditional Medicare through the federal government [does not currently include a dental benefit](#). **Seventy-seven percent** of adults in Pennsylvania say dental benefits are not covered by traditional Medicare, and **94%** agree or strongly agree that Medicare should cover dental care.

Take Action for Oral Health!

This election season is a key moment to raise the profile of oral health as a critical health policy issue among candidates. The Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN) has developed an advocacy toolkit with informational one-pagers, sample social media, and more to make outreach to candidates easy. **To learn more, visit the [OPEN Advocacy Toolkit](#).**



To learn more about adult dental benefits in Medicaid and Medicare, visit carequest.org/topics/adult-dental-benefit

Source: CareQuest Institute for Oral Health conducted a national poll of 9,307 adults between March 14 and May 24, 2024, through the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago AmeriSpeak® panel. The margin of error rate is +1.44%. State estimates were derived from state-specific oversamples. Methodology details are available upon request at analytics@carequest.org.