

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

Medi-Cal Dental is the largest dental program in the country, **covering dental care for nearly 15 million low-income Californians**. The fee-for-service program covers 93% of the Medi-Cal population, with exceptions for dental managed care 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. Medi-Cal's dental services for children continued, as required by federal law.

2014

State budget restored many adult dental services that were eliminated in 2009, including basic prevention, diagnostics, and 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 and new student loan repayment funding for dentists and physicians. The five-year Dental Transformation Initiative (DTI) pilot program began, focused on increasing preventive dental services and continuity of care for children, and preventing and treating more early childhood caries (cavities).

2017

State budget restored coverage starting in 2018 for the remaining adult dental services that were eliminated in 2009, including laboratory crowns for front teeth, root canals on back teeth, periodontal care for gum disease and partial dentures. Additionally, a new reimbursement was created to support treatment for patients with special needs.

2022

The CA Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal program expanded and included the most successful elements of the DTI pilot program. State budget further expanded dental coverage, adding laboratory-processed crowns for adults.

2024

California voters approved Proposition 35, which allocates new funding to increase Medi-Cal Dental reimbursement rates starting in 2027, and secures annual funding for dental student loan repayments.

Proposition 35

Co-sponsored by CDA, Proposition 35 is a landmark initiative that will protect and expand health care access for nearly 15 million Californians through existing managed care organization taxes on health insurance companies. Prop. 35 will improve the Medi-Cal Dental program by providing:

- » Designated funds for dental services of approximately \$350 million annually, which will amount to at least a 10% increase in the total annual budget. The intent is to focus dental rate increases on restorative and specialty services for adults, complementing the increases made through Prop. 56 and the Dental Transformation Initiative pilot which primarily targeted prevention and children's services.
- » New funding for CalHealthCares, the state's student loan repayment program for dentists and physicians, securing up to \$10 million annually for dental student loan repayments. In exchange for student loan repayment, providers must serve the Medi-Cal population.