



# ORAL HEALTH IOWA LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

Oral Health Iowa (OHI) is the unified voice for oral health in Iowa, bringing together both dental and non-dental professionals to improve oral health for all Iowans.

**Dental care access for Iowans with Medicaid is in crisis. A declining number of dentists participate in Medicaid because Iowa has not seen a meaningful increase in Medicaid dental payment rates in nearly 30 years.**

- **About one in five Iowans** is enrolled in Medicaid.
- In 2023, **only one in three Iowa dentists accept new children with Medicaid**, and **one in five accept new adults.** \*
- In 2024, **Iowa ranks 45th in the nation** for Medicaid reimbursement rates for dental services.\*
- **Iowa Medicaid reimburses about 30 cents for every dollar** a dentist charges. This doesn't cover the cost of overhead.\*
- Stagnating, low reimbursement has led to a **decline in dentist participation**, which has reduced dental care access for Iowans with Medicaid.

## Dental care access is essential

- **Reduces costs** to Medicaid for emergency department visits for preventable dental conditions
- **Reduces long-term medical costs** for chronic medical conditions connected to poor oral health
- **Improves overall health**, leading to better employment opportunities and readiness



## THE SOLUTION

**Raise Iowa Medicaid dental reimbursement rates to align with Healthy and Well Kids in Iowa (Hawki) rates.**

**“I came to Burlington in the summer of 1988 to take over a Children’s Dental Practice. I saw exclusively children for 10 yrs. The profit from my non-Medicaid patients covered the losses from Medicaid patients, but as the percentage of Medicaid patients rose, it became unsustainable.”**

- Dr. John Moore

# RETURN ON INVESTMENT FOR IMPROVING DENTAL CARE ACCESS

**Extreme cases of untreated dental infections** cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in hospitalization, and some have ended in tragic yet preventable deaths.

**Emergency department visits for dental problems** cost three times as much as a visit to the dentist.\*

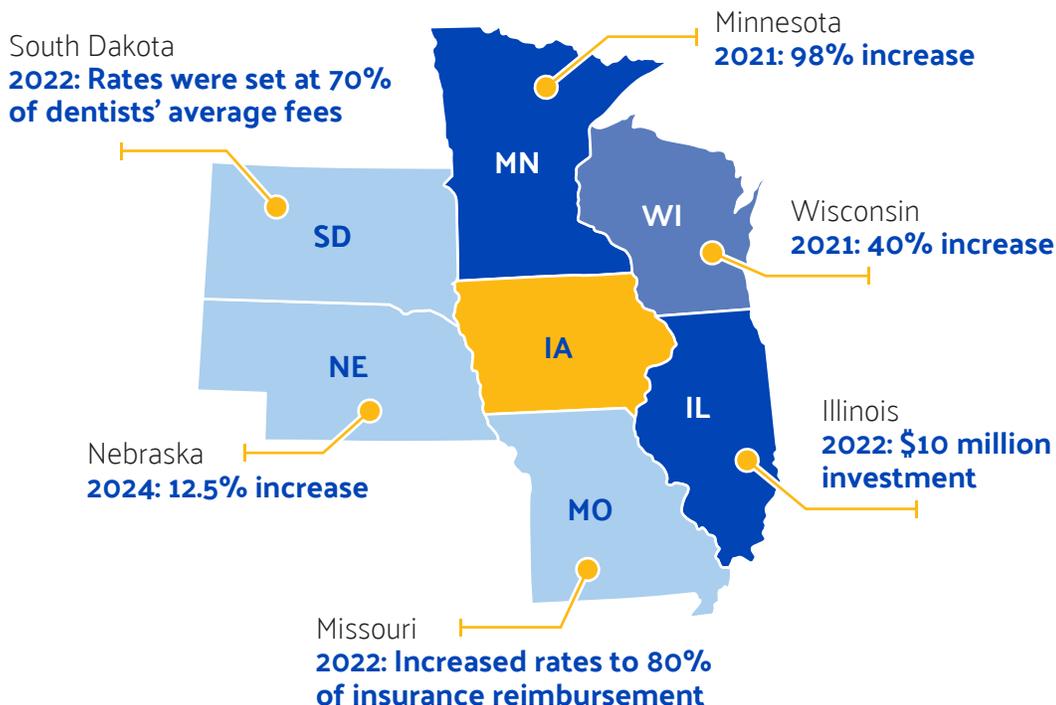
**More than 6,000 Iowans sought emergency care** in hospitals for preventable oral health concerns, billed out at more than \$12,152,000.\*

**“ The shortage of Medicaid providers in Iowa due to stagnant reimbursement rates is creating a significant barrier to accessing oral healthcare, particularly for low-income individuals. This issue is exacerbated by the need for patients to travel long distances to receive care at the limited facilities still accepting new patients. “**

- Dr. Riley Cholewa, Dental Director, Dental Connections

## IOWA'S DENTAL MEDICAID PROGRAM IS BEHIND

In the last four years, ALL the states bordering Iowa made significant investments in their dental Medicaid programs.



**Got questions?**

Contact us at:

[oralhealthiowa@gmail.com](mailto:oralhealthiowa@gmail.com)



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