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September 2025

MDAC Biennial Oral Health Summit - November 17, 2025

Innovation, Advocacy, Action: Shaping Maryland's Oral Health Future



On November 17, MDAC will host an all-day in-person oral health summit meeting – *Innovation, Advocacy, Action: Shaping Maryland's Oral Health Future*, at Turf Valley Resort, Ellicott City, Maryland. This year's program spotlights Medicaid coverage, workforce solutions, school-based care, community health workers, and the future of fluoridation. Through keynotes and breakout sessions, attendees will gain insights,

celebrate advocacy with the inaugural Senator Benjamin L. Cardin Oral Health Advocacy Lifetime Achievement Award, and explore strategies to advance oral health equity statewide.

MDAC members, partners and stakeholders statewide are highly encouraged to attend and learn from peers and share information on programs and strategies to address equitable access in care and care delivery during these challenging times. Approval of 4 CEUs for the course pending review by the Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners.

Session topics include:

How Big Bold Advocacy Will Save Medicaid

As Maryland navigates budget shortfalls and an evolving federal policy landscape, what must be done to protect and strengthen our Medicaid programs that support availability and access to oral health care? This timely panel brings together advocates to explore how we can build a united front in support of Maryland Medical Assistance Programs.

Improving Children's Oral Health Through School Based Programs

Recent data from the 2022/2023 Oral Health Survey of Maryland School Children reveals a troubling rise in untreated dental decay, with 21% of students affected, up from 14% in the previous survey in 2015/2016. Alarming, 30% of students in the recent survey required early follow-up or urgent care due to pain or infection. This panel will explore the critical role

that school-based health centers and oral health initiatives can play in addressing these health issues.

Early Career Dental Professionals Share Perspectives on Practicing in Underserved Communities

Hear directly from the next generation of oral health professionals in this panel consisting of early career dental professionals. These dental and dental hygiene students will share what inspires them to serve underserved communities, how they envision their future in the field, and what challenges and opportunities they see ahead.

How Maryland Can Address the Dental Hygienist Shortage

Between 2019 and 2023, Maryland experienced a 10% decrease in its dental hygiene workforce (Source: ADA, Health Policy Institute). This trend is straining oral health care access across the state. This panel will explore the causes and consequences of the dental hygienist shortage and discuss actionable strategies to strengthen the workforce.

CHWs at Work: Policy Wins, Oral Health Integration, and Future Opportunities

Community Health Workers (CHWs) play a vital role connecting individuals to care, building trust, and improving health outcomes across Maryland. Panelists will highlight recent policy and programmatic wins for the CHW workforce, share on-the-ground successes, and discuss future opportunities to further elevate and support CHWs as essential partners in advancing health equity.

Fluoride: Protecting a Proven Public Health Tool

Public and political discourse around community water fluoridation has shifted dramatically in recent years, driven by misinformation and growing skepticism and federal-level leadership. This session will explore what is at stake for oral health, particularly for young children, if fluoride is removed from community water sources.

The full agenda for the November 17 MDAC Oral Health Summit can be found [here](#).

Register today!

MDAC Establishes the Senator Benjamin L. Cardin Oral Health Advocacy Lifetime Achievement Award

Fifteen years ago, MDAC transitioned from the Dental Action Committee into an independent coalition with a broadened mission to improve oral health equity in Maryland. Pursuit of this mission has been through advocacy, education, and awareness, producing change in state policies and health delivery systems to the betterment of oral and overall health of all residents, all ages. Since its beginning, the success of MDAC's advocacy work has been buoyed by the steadfast commitment, determination, and resolve of Maryland's state and congressional leaders.

Senator Benjamin Cardin carried his commitment to oral health beyond state lines into Washington DC and spearheaded change to advance policies that addressed the imperative for dental care for children, adults, and seniors, particularly those most vulnerable and in need.



Due to this unwavering attentiveness and revered leadership among colleagues, millions upon millions are healthier due to inclusion of dental care in the Children's Health Insurance Program and the Affordable Care Act. While achieving success on policies having national impact, Senator Cardin's dedication and commitment to oral health improvements in Maryland never wavered and his direct participation in MDAC advocacy and legislative hearings through testimony was critical to securing comprehensive adult dental coverage in Medicaid.

Senator Cardin's recognition of the critical importance of oral health care and years of advocating for and securing national and state policies that acknowledge oral health as health is the basis for the establishment of the MDAC Senator Benjamin L. Cardin Oral Health Advocacy Lifetime Achievement Award.

MDAC is delighted and honored that Senator Cardin has enthusiastically accepted an invitation to accept the award at the Oral Health Summit, in person, and deliver remarks. Fittingly, the award will be presented to Senator Cardin by a bipartisan group of Maryland legislators who championed the introduction and passage of the historical bill that expanded Medicaid adult dental coverage to nearly 800,000 Marylanders.

In the future, this distinguished recognition will be presented to an exceptional individual whose advocacy work in oral health has secured change in health policies and systems for lasting impact. It will be based on collective work and not necessarily be annually recognized and presented.

Join the celebration!

Federal Rural Health Transformation Fund Announced

Maryland Department of Health seeking your input on approaches to rural health challenges



On September 15, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) on how states can apply to receive funding from the \$50 billion Rural Health Transformation Fund (RHTF) program created under HR 1/One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The RHTF is designed to support state efforts to transform existing rural health care infrastructure and build sustainable health care systems that expand access, enhance quality of care, and improve outcomes for patients ([CMS Webpage](#)).

To help inform the state's proposal to the RHTF program, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is currently seeking projects, concepts, and approaches to help meet rural health challenges in Maryland. Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to submit their project proposals or ideas using the request for information form available at bit.ly/MdRuralHealth-Input.

This time sensitive request for information is for planning and information-gathering purposes and will be open until September 30, 2025. No contracts or grants will be awarded based on the answers to this survey.

MDH welcomes input from all Marylanders and especially rural Marylanders and those who serve rural communities. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Rural residents
- Community-based organizations
- Hospitals and health systems
- Federally qualified health centers and community clinics
- Health care professionals and networks - from primary care to specialty care
- Post-acute providers, including skilled nursing and assisted living facilities
- Behavioral health professionals
- Educational institutions and health care workforce programs
- Local governments

MDAC is submitting approaches and ideas to the department to ensure that dental health and all facets to support accessibility to care are included in the state proposal. Rural communities have significantly limited access to oral health care and as a result, experience significantly lower utilization rates, and poorer health outcomes in comparison with urban communities. It is highly likely that these disparities are related to difficult barriers rural communities are facing every day, including inefficient workforce; lack of transportation; inadequate numbers of providers who participate in Maryland Medicaid; inefficient oral health literacy and education; and separation of oral and primary care.

Dental health is health and should not be eliminated, optional, or a separate component in the availability and delivery of care. MDAC highly encourages partners and stakeholders throughout the state to submit approaches, comments, and ideas. Your input is critical to the state's ability to improve rural health outcomes and to ensure that oral health care is not excluded. This is a highly time sensitive request so please submit your comments and ideas to MDH today!

Submit your project ideas.

2025 Maryland Rural Health Conference: October 19-21, Annapolis

Turning the Tide: Rural Health Solutions for a Changing Maryland

Maryland Rural Health Association's mission is to educate and support the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. This annual conference will bring together rural health leaders from across the state to discuss pressing rural health issues, challenges, new emerging innovative solutions, and promoting best practices. MRHA's annual conference attracts health care executives, management administration staff, hospital leadership, community and public health organizations, health education professionals, academic researchers, university and college professionals, State Offices of Rural Health staff, state and federal government officials, and other rural health stakeholders.

Meeting agenda, accommodations, registration, and other related information is available here: <https://mdruralhealth.org/events/view/2025-maryland-rural-health-conference>

The following article was submitted by the Maryland Department of Health Office of Oral Health.



Shaping Smiles, Shaping Futures

On September 1, 2025, the Maryland Department of Health, Office of Oral Health, launched **Shaping Smiles, Shaping Futures**, a multi-channel media campaign designed to bring attention to the State's [Pathways to Bright Futures](#) (PBF) Program. PBF is a dental education-to-career pipeline program that connects young people living in Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas like Baltimore City, the Eastern Shore, and Western Maryland with opportunities to learn about and pursue careers in the dental professions.

There is a shortage of dental professionals in Maryland that is making it hard for many people to find dental care – especially in already underserved communities. PBF offers students ways they can learn about and access the dental professions. Through presentations in schools, experiential learning opportunities, academic awards, and dental workshops, students can learn about and take the first step towards one of many exciting careers in dentistry.

The **Shaping Smiles, Shaping Futures** media campaign reaches out to 16 - 22-year-olds who live in Baltimore City, on the Eastern Shore, or in Western Maryland. It includes radio, mobile display and video, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat advertising as well as community outreach. According to Dr. Debonny Hughes, Maryland State Dental Director, "We want to let young people know about the need for dental professionals in their area and how they can build a career in dentistry that will help them give back to their communities."

By attracting students to PBF, the Maryland Department of Health hopes to address the dental workforce shortage and lay the foundation for a diverse and dynamic dental workforce in Maryland. The campaign will run until November 24, 2025.

To learn more about **Shaping Smiles, Shaping Futures** or the **Pathways to Bright Futures**, program visit: [Health.maryland.gov/bright-futures](https://health.maryland.gov/bright-futures)



"The United States dentist workforce is undergoing a generational shift, becoming younger, more female, and more racially and ethnically diverse. While the overall supply of dentists continues to grow, uneven geographic distribution and economic pressures pose ongoing challenges."

Machado, Kristin Pratt. [The Future of Dentistry Is Young Women](#). Decisions in Dentistry Journal. Sep 7, 2025.

NEWS & RESOURCES

Access/Coverage

[America has an oral health crisis](#)

Children's Oral Health

[What Dentistry Can Learn From Kid-Friendly Hospitals](#)

Chronic Disease

[The Missing Piece in Chronic Disease Prevention: Dental Caries](#)

Dental-Medical Integration

[How pediatricians are helping more Ohio kids get dental care](#)

[Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Researchers Boost Widespread Use of Dental Varnish Across Pediatric Network](#)

Equity

[Perspectives and Experiences with Equitable Data Collection in Oral Health](#)

Fluoride

[Which US States Will Pay the Most Without Fluoridated Water?](#)

[New Poll: Majority of Americans Support Water Fluoridation and Trust Dental and Medical Providers on the Issue](#)

General

[Investors are all in on digital health, but are missing oral health care.](#)

Medicare

[Medicare Mystery](#)

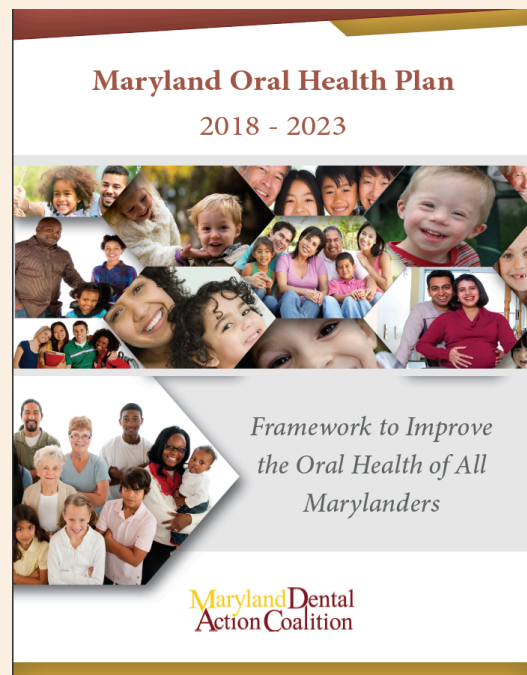
[ADA Urges Reforms to Medicare Advantage Dental Benefits](#)

Public Health

RESOURCE: Provider Enrollment Flyer

To learn how Maryland dental providers can enroll in the Maryland Healthy Smiles Dental Program and resources provided, [review this enrollment flyer](#) and share with others!

RESOURCE: Maryland Oral Health Plan



The Maryland Oral Health Plan outlines 11 oral health goals in three key areas: access to oral health care, oral disease and injury prevention, and oral health literacy and education.

DOWNLOAD THE PLAN

The Maryland Oral Health Plan is financially supported by the Maryland Department of Health.

Legislative Contacts

[Best Practice Approach: Perinatal Oral Health](#)

Veterans

[House Passes Defense Bill with ADA-supported Dental Provisions](#)

Workforce

[The Future of Dentistry is Young Women](#)

[U.S. Senators \(MD\)](#)

[U.S. Representatives \(MD\)](#)

[Maryland State Legislators](#)

Meetings/ Events/ Webinars

[ADHA25 Annual Conference](#)
[Dental Hygiene Dreamin'](#)
[Long Beach Convention Center](#)
[October 4-6, 2025](#)
[Long Beach, CA](#)

[Maryland Rural Health Association](#)
[Annual Conference](#)
[Turning the Tide: Rural Health](#)
[Solutions for a Changing Maryland](#)
[October 19-21, 2025](#)
[Doubletree by Hilton Annapolis](#)
[Hotel](#)
[Annapolis, MD](#)

[ADA SmileCon®](#)
[October 23-25, 2025](#)
[Walter E. Washington Convention](#)
[Center](#)
[Washington, DC](#)

[National Network for Oral Health](#)
[Access Annual Conference](#)
[These Are My People](#)
[November 9-12, 2025](#)
[San Antonio Marriott Riverside](#)
[San Antonio, Texas](#)

[Maryland Dental Action Coalition](#)
[Biennial Oral Health Summit](#)
[Monday, November 17, 2025](#)
[Turf Valley Conference Center](#)
[Ellicott City, MD](#)

[National Oral Health Conference](#)
[Unveiling Oral Health Possibilities](#)
[April 13-15, 2026](#)
[Oklahoma City, Oklahoma](#)



Join us! To become an MDAC member, [click here.](#)

CONTACT

Do you have events or announcements you'd like to share? Contact MDAC, and we'll make every effort to include them in our next newsletter, as space permits.

Contact MDAC

JOIN

MDAC is statewide coalition of clinical care providers, governments, non-profits, academic institutions, managed care organizations, foundations and associations working collaboratively to improve the health of all Marylanders through increased oral health promotion, disease prevention, education, advocacy and access to oral health care.

Join MDAC

www.mdac.us

FOLLOW US



Maryland Dental Action Coalition | 10015 Old Columbia Road Suite B-215 | Columbia, MD 21046 US

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