



Summary of Health Policy Institute Research on Costs and Savings of Creating an Adult Dental Benefit in MaineCare

Maine is one of only 10 states that provide emergency-only adult dental benefits.

There are 20 states that provide comprehensive adult dental benefits and 16 that provide limited benefits. Cost is the most significant barrier to obtaining dental care, particularly for low-income adults. In 2015, three out of four low-income adults in Maine who did not visit the dentist in the past year indicated cost was the reason.

Dental care usually ranks above all other health care services in terms of unmet need due to financial barriers, especially among low-income adults. **37% of low-income Mainers indicated that the condition of their mouth and teeth affects their ability to interview for a job.** This suggests that a lack of dental coverage negatively affects employability prospects.

Research shows that improved oral health is linked with increases in the likelihood of employment as well as lifetime earnings, particularly for women and low-income populations.

Children in states with a full Medicaid adult dental benefit, whose parents have dental coverage, are also more likely to have had a dental visit in the past year and less likely to have deferred dental care.

Key cost-benefit takeaways

The fiscal note for LD 1955 in the 129th Maine Legislature estimated the cost to the state of Maine to be \$3.9 million annually for implementation of a Medicaid adult dental benefit. The fiscal note considered the cost of dental care and the associated savings for reductions in emergency dental services.

HPI estimated additional medical care cost savings from an adult dental benefit for MaineCare members with diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and those who are pregnant. Improved oral health is associated with lower medical care costs for these conditions. Considering those medical care savings, HPI estimates the **net cost to the state of Maine of implementing an adult dental benefit to be \$2.7 million annually, or \$1.41 per enrollee per month.**

HPI also estimates the additional broader **economic impact of an adult dental benefit to be \$21.6 million annually, with nearly half the additional economic impact in rural areas.**

The Health Policy Institute (HPI) is an interdisciplinary team of health economists, statisticians, and analysts with extensive expertise in health systems policy research. HPI is a thought leader and trusted source for policy knowledge on critical issues affecting the U.S. dental care system. The full report is available at: https://mainepcoh.org/publications/ADA_HPI_Estimating_the_Cost_of_MADB_in_Maine_FINAL.pdf

Dental benefit for MaineCare, by the numbers:

Estimated <i>reduction</i> in health care costs for those...	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
With diabetes	\$ 0	\$ 1,214,834	\$ 2,429,668
With cardiovascular disease	\$ 0	\$ 272,005	\$544,010
Who are pregnant	\$ 0	\$510,434	\$1,020,869
Estimated total medical care cost savings	\$ 0	\$1,997,273	\$3,994,546
State share of cost savings	\$ 0	\$579,209	\$1,158,418
State share of net cost of adult dental benefit	\$ 4,183,815	\$3,309,342	\$2,730,133
Per enrollee per month	\$2.16	\$1.71	\$1.41

Considering the medical care savings for those with diabetes or cardiovascular disease and for Mainers who are pregnant, **the total medical care costs savings are estimated to be \$1,997,273 in year two, and \$3,994,546 in year three.**

When federal matching funds are applied (the FMAP), there is an estimated medical care cost savings for Maine of \$579,209 in year two, and \$1,158,418 in year three. The remaining cost would be paid for by the federal government per the FMAP specified by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

Economic impact of a dental benefit in Maine

An annual investment of \$2.7 million – the net cost to the State of Maine of a MaineCare adult dental benefit – is expected to yield an economic return to the Maine economy of \$21.6 million.

- Nearly 48% of adult MaineCare members live in rural areas. Therefore, HPI estimates that the economic multiplier effect in rural areas of an adult dental benefit in MaineCare would be \$10,860,920 in the first year and \$10,316,743 in the second and third years.
- The economic impact in urban/suburban areas is estimated to be \$11,860,670 in the first year and \$11,266,402 in the second and third years.

- Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs):
 - HPI estimates ¼ of new dental patients because of an adult dental benefit in MaineCare will get their care at FQHCs.
 - As a result, FQHCs will see additional revenue of approximately \$4,057,427 in year one, and \$3,854,133 in years two and three, resulting from an increase in MaineCare patient volume of 9,452 patients each year.
 - However, HPI did not study whether the additional revenues are adequate to cover the incremental costs of these services, given other factors affecting FQHC reimbursement.

- While HPI was unable to estimate the economic impact for nonprofit dental centers, they anticipate the new dental benefit will have a positive effect on nonprofit dental center revenues.