Progress and Impact Mid-Biennium Report: Oral Health (2025-2027)

Oregon Health Authority (OHA)'s Dental and Oral Health program ensures Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members have access to quality, equitable care by upholding an efficient delivery system and maintaining a sufficient workforce.

Program background and summary

Oregon's Medicaid dental program is a cornerstone of the state's health reform. Since the 1990s, Oregon has integrated oral health into broader healthcare transformation because the mouth is the gateway to the body. Oral health directly impacts systemic conditions like diabetes and heart disease, making dental care essential to achieving true whole-health outcomes and overall well-being. Following the elimination of adult dental benefits in 2003 due to budget constraints, the restoration of comprehensive adult coverage in 2014 under Medicaid expansion marked a turning point. Providing comprehensive adult dental coverage has yielded benefits beyond oral health: OHP members have experienced improved overall health outcomes, and the state has seen reduced reliance on emergency departments and primary care for preventable dental issues (1.6 visits/1000 members in 2022)[1] compared to the era when coverage was absent (8.7 visit/1000 members in 2012). In 2023, OHA ended direct contracts with Dental Care Organizations (DCOs), integrating oral health directly into Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs) to match Oregon's vision for whole-person care. While a fraction of members remain on Fee-for-Service plans, this shift consolidated most care. Still, the multi-layered administrative structure—where CCOs contract out to dental subcontractors—limits OHA's ability to directly maintain real-time visibility into dental benefit delivery and patient access.

Trends and outcomes summary

As of early 2026, 32 of Oregon's 36 counties are federal dental Health Professional Shortage Areas.[2] The shortage is especially acute for OHP members: 2025 data show only 31% of licensed dentists filed a Medicaid claim, with just 18% of enrolled providers handling the bulk of these services. Dentists attribute this to low reimbursement rates and the administrative burdens of managing varied contracting, enrollment, and billing requirements across multiple CCOs and their various dental subcontractors.

This constrained system faced a surge of new members when the COVID-19 public health emergency expanded OHP enrollment. Because membership growth outpaced dental provider capacity, access challenges intensified. 37% of eligible members received dental care in 2024. Consequently, emergency department utilization for non-traumatic dental conditions rose to ~9.5 visits per 1,000 members in 2024.[3]

Despite these system-wide capacity limits, OHP successfully delivered over 2 million preventative treatments to more than 50000 members in 2025, while OHA-certified school dental sealants programs[4] applied 89,816 sealants to 25,318 students during the 2024–2025 school year.

Program funding

Dental services constitute 4 - 5 percent of total CCO capitation, with costs and utilization varying by population and region. The following historical figures show that while overall OHP enrollment grew by more than 40% since 2018, dental utilization Per Member Per Month (PMPM) peaked in 2019 and has since plateaued below pre-pandemic baselines. Reduced utilization PMPM has directly led to lower capitation rates, because capitation rates are calculated to fund expected levels of care based on recent data and emerging trends. In 2025 OHA attempted to incentivize higher utilization of care through dental directed payments, but the uptake on these payments was around half of expectations.

Year	Average members enrolled per month, CCO + FFS	Utilization per 1000 members per month	PMPM utilization, normalized to CY26 FFS Schedule	Capitation rate PMPM
2025	1,532,316	330	$17.62	$23.50
2024	1,491,218	309	$17.40	$22.90
2023	1,517,067	273	$15.48	$23.98
2022	1,431,100	249	$14.77	$22.99
2021	1,328,029	250	$15.34	$21.72
2020	1,175,401	205	$13.03	$24.52
2019	1,094,826	299	$19.69	$27.05
2018	1,084,003	286	$18.96	$26.56

Objectives, outputs and outcomes

Below are a selection of measures that demonstrate the work of the OHP Oral Health program during the first 12 months of the 2025-2027 biennium.

Objective 1:

Increase in dental provider participation in OHP.

Outputs:
Number of OHP credentialed dental providers.

Percentage of enrolled dentists who billed OHP at least once in the last year.

Outcomes:
Reduced average travel time and distance for OHP members to reach a dentist.

Decreased waiting times for routine and urgent appointments.

Objective 2:

Increase OHP dental service utilization.

Outputs:
Total number of OHP members who receive any dental service.

Number of preventative dental services delivered.

Outcomes:
Higher percentage of OHP members receiving preventative dental services.

Long-term reduction in the severity of dental disease upon first presentation.

Objective 3:

Enhanced Medicaid dental integration for OHP members.

Output:
Decrease emergency department utilization for non-traumatic dental conditions.

Outcomes:
Measurable reduction in state Medicaid spending on ED visits for preventable dental pain / infection.

Improved bi-directional referrals between primary care providers and dentists.

Considerations

Since 2023, OHP has significantly invested in expanding dental access by raising provider rates from 28% to 76.4% of commercial averages.[5] Oregon also made history in 2025 as the first state to secure a CMS-approved value-based directed payment program for dentistry.[6] Furthermore, the state's pioneering medical/dental integration - specifically oral evaluations for adults with diabetes launched in 2021 - proved so successful it was adopted into CMS's national core quality metrics starting 2027.[7]

Other formats and languages

You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer free of charge. Contact the Financial Investments and Outcomes Office at ashley.gonzalez@oha.oregon.gov or 503-267-1492 (voice/text). We accept all relay calls.

Medicaid Division
Oral Health Program
500 Summer St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
medicaid.programs@odhsoha.oregon.gov
Oral Health Program Website

OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY

[1] Evaluation of Oregon's 2017 - 2022 Medicaid Waiver [pdf]
[2] HPSA Find [external HRSA website]
[3] CCO Metrics Overall Population [Oregon.gov]
[4] School Dental Sealant Programs [Oregon.gov]
[5] Dental Care in Medicaid Programs (Health Policy Institute) [pdf]
[6] Dental Directed Payment Incentives [Oregon.gov]
[7] 2027 Updates to the Child and Adult Core Health Care Quality Measurement Sets and Mandatory Reporting Guidance (DHHS) [pdf]