

# Systems of Care & Oral Health



## Independent Systems of Care

### Independent Medical and Dental Institutions Were Established in the mid-1800's

Since the establishment of separate schools and associations, dentistry has been kept apart from medical care in the United States, affecting its practice, service delivery, and insurance coverage.



### The Affordable Care Act Reinforced Industry Separation by Excluding Adult Dental Care

Dental care for children was included in the Affordable Care Act and it lowered disease and costs. But stand-alone dental plans for adults increased between 2014 and 2016, which reinforced the separation of dental and medical insurance.

## Impact on Oral Health

### Oral Health Inequality

#### Working aged adults and seniors are most likely to encounter financial barriers for dental care.

Dental insurance policies for children, working-age adults, and seniors significantly impact affordability. According to data, financial barriers to dental care are more significant for all age groups than for any other health service. Children face significantly lower financial barriers to dental care than other groups.



### Productivity Costs

#### Untreated dental disease in the US is unnecessary and economic disaster.

Oral health problems result in millions of lost school hours for children and up to \$45 billion of lost productivity for adults in the US. Improving oral health is vital for people and the economy.

### Recent Progress

The FDI World Dental Federation General Assembly recently refined the definition of oral health to include physiological and psychological functions.

"Oral health is multifaceted and includes the ability to speak, smile, smell, taste, touch, chew, swallow, and convey a range of emotions through facial expressions with confidence and without pain, discomfort, and disease of the craniofacial complex."

## Reforms Needed to Improve Oral Health

### Insurance

Dental care should be considered an essential health benefit for all age groups. Comprehensive dental coverage should be made available in public health insurance programs and included as a core benefit in private health insurance coverage.

### Delivery Model

Policymakers must reform the care delivery model to get dentistry out of its care delivery silo. Rise above the scope of practice turf wars fueled by fee-for-service payment and move toward financial incentives that reward oral health improvements.

### Diverse Practices

Complementary and alternative medicine is a type of healthcare that includes various practices that are not used in conventional medicine. These treatment modalities can be effective, affordable, and safe when used as alternative healthcare in dentistry.



References