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Upcoming Events

Elmwood Community Senior Health Fair
Elmwood Community Center, West Hartford
April 16 9 - 1pm
Open to all Seniors in WH

Legislative Breakfast
Old Judiciary Room, Capitol
May 20

COHI Golf Classic
Wintonbury Hill Golf Club
June 12

Quick Links

If You Like What We Are Doing, Please Support Us.
DONATE NOW

Action Alert: Call NOW Budget

Cuts Affect HUSKY/Medicaid Dental Coverage for Kids and Adults



These are crucial days for the state's budget. The [Appropriations Committee](#) is putting the final touches on its proposal this week. They are expected to release it on April 23rd. Shortly after, the [Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee](#) will issue their revenue proposal to fund the Appropriations plan which will set the stage for the 'Final Budget' agreement negotiated with the Governor.

This means that there is much at stake. The fate of many of the programs that affect the most vulnerable (children and low-income families) is being decided this week.

Changes in Dental Medicaid have resulted in great strides in [reducing disparities in oral health](#). [Proposed changes](#) could see these successes be quickly eroded rapidly leading to poor oral health and overall health.

What is the Concern?

- 34,000 low-income parents are slated to lose eligibility for HUSKY A
 - HUSKY parent eligibility is to be changed from 201% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) down to 138% FPL.
 - Pregnant women eligibility is to be changed from 263% FPL down to 190% FPL.
- Dental provider reimbursement is slated to be cut 5.6%

JOIN Today

The Connecticut Oral Health Initiative (COHI) is a non-profit organization with the vision of "Oral Health for All" is supported by grants and tax-deductible contributions from people like you.

Grants

-[Connecticut Health Foundation](#)
-[Department of Social Services](#)
-James McManus Fund of the Hartford Dental Society

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-[Connecticut State Dental Association](#)

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-Stamford Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery Associates

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-[Maria Seymour Brooker Memorial](#)
-[Pediatric Dentistry Associates](#)
-[RDH Temps, Inc.](#)

There are plenty of reasons to join today. Have a positive impact on oral health policy.

[Click here](#) for more information and to start your corporate, organization or individual membership today!

Amazon Smile

Support COHI every time you shop on Amazon by designating COHI on [AmazonSmile](#).

- Provider rates have not been increased since 2008 and are currently set on 2005 normal fees.

NOW is the time to contact your legislators.

- Get your [facts](#) concerning Medicaid cuts and its "costs" on children and adults and the state expenditures here.
- Tell your legislator about the budget issues that affect the health of our state residents. [Sample call](#). [Sample email](#).
- If they are not members of the Appropriations Committee, ask them to talk to leadership and members of the Appropriations Committee about your issue.
- Ask them to support new revenue as part of the budget package. If your items cost money, there will need to be new revenues to support these expenditures. Read the [CT Voices for Children Revenue Options Summary](#) for lawmakers' consideration. Again, we are simply asking for responsible revenue policy that matches responsible spending policy. [Read the full Issue Brief here](#).

Your calls can make a huge difference as [more](#) and [more](#) legislators are talking about the need for more revenue, looking for ways to avert the cuts.

If you can, pick up the phone. Send them an e-mail this week.

Thanks for all your support. Now it is time to make a difference!

See how these cuts would affect Adults and Children by reading the following fact sheets:

Find your legislator at [CGA](#)

Proposed cut in dental reimbursement could jeopardize children's care

**CT Mirror, April 13, 2015
By Tryfon Beazoglou, PhD**



In an April 13th article, which ran in the *CT Mirror*, Dr.

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Beazoglou provides an overview of how valuable gains in oral health may be jeopardized. Dr. Beazoglou writes:

"Gov. Dannel Malloy's proposed budget charges the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) with achieving \$90 million in savings through a reduction in provider rates.

*DSS is recommending Medicaid (HUSKY) provider rate reductions for 12 provider categories, including dental. The proposed 5.6 percent cut in dental fees may seem small, but on top of existing fee lags and the improved economic environment, it is likely to affect dental providers' patient mix - **reducing the access to oral health services by those covered by Medicaid.**"*

[Read full article](#)

Number of Dentists Accepting Medicaid, HUSKY Increases, But Coverage Gaps Persist

Hartford Courant, April 6, 2015

By Cara Rosner, Conn. Health I-Team Writer

Thousands of low-income adults and children have gained access to dental services in recent years as the number of dentists accepting Medicaid and HUSKY patients has soared, according to state data.



At the end of last year, there were 2,002 dentists who accepted Medicaid or HUSKY plans. That's nearly three times the 703 dentists who accepted Medicaid or HUSKY on Dec. 31, 2008, according to the state Department of Social Services (DSS).

"That's a pretty expansive network," Donna Balaski, director of dental services at DSS, said of the 2014 figure. "We have better access than commercial plans in our state."

While more dentists are accepting Medicaid and HUSKY plans, health advocates say there is room for improvement in utilization and access to oral health care, especially for low-income adults.

[Read full article](#)

After providers complain, lawmakers consider changes to Medicaid audits

CT Mirror, April 14, 2015

Ed Funaro Jr. thought the audit of the independent pharmacy he and his father run went pretty well. He found the auditor from the state Department of Social Services helpful.



Then he got the results: Out of 100 Medicaid prescriptions reviewed, the Funaros' drug store, Visels Pharmacy in New Haven, would be penalized for three problematic prescriptions, for which Medicaid paid \$268.04.

And the pharmacy was expected to pay \$144,814. in fines.

[Read full article](#)

For more information on the impact of the Audits on dental practice, please contact the [CT State Dental Association](#).

Good Medicaid News

From CT Health Policy Project



The [Connecticut Health Policy Project](#) reported, *At this month's Medicaid Council meeting, we heard about the impressive new resources and support for members and providers in Connecticut's Medicaid and Dental Medicaid programs. New members receive a welcome packet and a health needs assessment to connect them to the resources they need. The new HUSKY website is mobile-compatible and includes comprehensive information both for members and providers.*

The site also features a provider and person-centered medical home search function, coverage explanation, health education information, and links to other services

such as housing, food and income support. A lack of consistent, clear policy information used to be a significant barrier to provider Medicaid participation in our physician survey.

Oral Health Legislative Breakfast at the Capitol - May 20th

Oral health impacts everyone's health and well-being



You are cordially invited to join us on Wednesday, May 20 at our Legislative Breakfast from 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM in the Old Judiciary Room at the State Capitol Building.

Come to hear about our organization and the status of oral health in CT. Join the discussion highlighting the importance of oral health on overall health and how budget cuts to Medicaid will decrease access to care. Discussion will follow on how you can help make a difference.

Throughout the morning there will be three presentations:

8:30: Learn about COHI

9:00: Medicaid budget cuts affecting CT residents

9:30: Oral health impacts total health

Please contact your legislator and invite them to attend as well. Visit www.ctoralhealth.org for more information and to access a [sample invite to your legislator](#). You can find your legislator [here](#). To RSVP or if you have questions, contact info@ctoralhealth.org or 860-246-2644.

COHI Board Welcomes Lynnette Fuller

COHI welcomes Lynnette Fuller as a new Director on our Board. Ms. Fuller came to COHI wanting to "advocate for oral health for children and families with a focus on socially vulnerable populations."

She has dedicated over 17 years as a Connecticut government official working in as a Protective Services Social Worker for the Dept. of Children and Families.



COHI's Let's Talk Teeth Campaign



The Let's Talk Teeth (LTT) Campaign rolls out more collateral.

Posters in English and Spanish will be disseminated in Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven. A number of health organizations who saw the posters at Oral Health Day at the Capitol offered to support LTT by displaying the posters at their sites and at upcoming events.

Remember to like us on Facebook ([Let's Talk Teeth](#)) and follow us on Twitter ([@letstalkteeth](#)) or visit our website www.letstalkteeth.org.

How to Cut the Cost of Medicaid: Fluoridate

Posted April 6, 2015, Campaign for Dental Health

Want to cut the cost of state Medicaid programs? The researchers of the recently published study, [Reducing early childhood caries in a Medicaid population](#), looked at no fewer than nine oral health interventions in New York and found the most effective way to do just that. Fluoridating the entire state would result in a net savings of more than \$10 million dollars over a 10-year period, and that represents savings on services to only a small portion of those covered by Medicaid - preschoolers. Since people of all ages [benefit from the dental health effects of fluoridated water](#), additional savings - both public and private - would be realized.

Had an ill-advised proposal to remove fluoride from the New York City water supply succeeded, the estimated additional cost to treat the resulting dental disease in just that city's Medicaid preschoolers would increase by more than \$54 million over 10 years.

[Community water fluoridation](#) is an effective cost containment measure. By preventing dental disease, it also reduces the need for treatment, especially costly treatment in emergency departments and operating rooms. Conserving millions of dollars in public funds is

the fiscally responsible choice to make. And, isn't it good to know that we're reducing the pain and suffering of preschoolers - and people - everywhere?

ICR/UCONN Seeking a Dental Hygienist

The Institute for Community Research (ICR) and the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine are seeking a part-time Dental Hygienist to conduct clinical assessments of plaque and gum health and electronic surveys in a federally-funded five-year Oral Health study in central Connecticut. The study is implementing and evaluating an oral hygiene intervention in multi-lingual low-income senior housing communities. Residents of the buildings are adults 62 years of age and over, and those with disabilities. The position requires fluent communication skills in English and Spanish.

To Complete An Application, please visit:

[UCONN Health Center Webpage](#)

For more information contact:

[Colleen Foster-Bey](#), Intervention Coordinator

[Zahira Medina](#), Evaluation Field Coordinator

[Jean Schensul](#), MPI

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The Connecticut Oral Health Initiative (COHI) is a state-wide collaboration of dental professionals, business and community leaders. We work to raise awareness, educate and advocate to accomplish our mission:

Oral Health for All.

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