

2011 Legislative Priorities

Dental Services Tax

The VSDS is opposed to the proposed tax on dental services. It will increase the cost of dental care and reduce access to dental care for Vermonters. This tax will create a significant barrier to new dentists with high overhead expenses. This proposal will harm the successful dentist recruitment and retention efforts that have been made in Vermont.

Dentistry and Health Care Reform

Oral health services are provided through geographically diverse private practices and dental clinics. **Private practices account for 80% of the dental care provided to Vermonters on Medicaid.** The VSDS believes that enhancing all Vermont's diverse dental facilities will improve access to oral health services and oral health for all will be enhanced.

Responding to Barriers for Those Without Care

The VSDS Committee to Improve Oral Health of Vermonters is identifying and recommending solutions to barriers to care for populations in need. **This Committee and the VSDS will work with the Vermont Department of Health in its three-year evaluation of Vermont's oral health issues.**

Maintain an Appropriate Dental Care Workforce in Vermont

80% of Vermont's dentists are general practitioners/pediatric dentists – the primary care dentist most Vermonters see. This is almost the opposite ratio of medical primary care to specialists. **The VSDS supports funding the Vermont Health Professions Loan Repayment Program** eliminated in the FY2009 budget **and funding support for the position of Vermont Dentist Recruitment Coordinator.**



Fully Fund and Expand Vermont's Tooth Tutor Program

Ensure that all Vermont Head Start and school children have access to a dental home for comprehensive preventive and restorative dental services. **The VSDS supports the expansion of this program to all Vermont schools where identified oral health deficiencies exist.**

Increase Medicaid Funding and Expand Adult Medicaid Dental Benefits

93% of Vermont dentists provide care to Medicaid eligible Vermonters. **The VSDS supports increasing Medicaid reimbursements to reach full, cost-based and equivalent reimbursements for all dental care providers.** The VSDS continues to support the completion of the "Dental Dozen," a 3-year plan to improve the oral health of the most vulnerable.

Create Benefits for Pregnant and Nursing Mothers

Scientific evidence shows that the transfer of bacteria from mother to young child is a cause of "Baby Bottle Tooth Decay" now known as "Early Childhood Caries." **Women who are eligible for Vermont Medicaid should receive the same dental benefits as the state employee dental plan.**

Continue and Expand Community Water Fluoridation

The CDC calls community water fluoridation one of the ten great public health achievements of the 20th century. **The VSDS supports community water fluoridation and its availability for all Vermonters.**

Dental Amalgam

The VSDS supports the availability of dental amalgam as a dental restorative material. It is one of several restorative options available to the patient to discuss with their dentist. The choice should rest with the patient working with his or her dentist.

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