

Creating Value and Access in Dental Networks for Patients through Joint Negotiations



In many markets, the dominance by a very small number of large insurance companies leaves dentists with almost no power in negotiating contracts that work for them and their patients. Passing legislation to allow Joint Negotiation can help level this playing field

Patient Concerns

Recent mergers of health and dental insurers have led to many markets where a small number of large insurance companies dominate.

Due to the lack of market competition, large insurers often approach contract negotiations with a "take it or leave it" approach without the opportunity for providers, such as dentists, to negotiate. Because most dental practices are also small businesses, the scales are tipped even further in the insurers' favor.

Dentists value consistency-of-care. They know that dropping from insurer networks could result in disruption of care for their patients. Insurance companies bet on the fact that dentists will be reluctant to leave their networks, taking advantage of dentists' commitment to patient care. Adding to the pressure dentists face, it has also become increasingly difficult for dentists to afford the radically reduced fees they must accept to remain "in network."

If this situation is left unchecked, patient access to their chosen provider will likely be diminished as dentists are compelled to drop from networks or seek more conducive environments in which to practice.

Solution

The North Dakota Dental Association (NDDA) supports legislation that would help dentists in their negotiations with insurance companies fostering a more competitive market for dental coverage. The result would be more care provided at an affordable cost. NDDA is prepared to help dentists take advantage of a law that allows them to band together to benefit their patients once passed.

What Are the Benefits of Joint Negotiation Laws?

Dentists in small practices are empowered to effectively negotiate contract terms with large insurers to the benefit of their patients.

Dental insurance contracts will reflect a better balance of the needs of patients, dentists, and insurers.

Improved coverage designs to help connect patients to the dental care they need.



To learn more about Joint Negotiation legislation in North Dakota, please contact the North Dakota Dental Association at 701-223-8870 or William Sherwin at wsherwin@smilenorthdakota.org.