Oral Health Study - Opportunities

North Dakota Interim Oral Health Study
Interim HealthCare Committee
Chair Representative Carrie McLeod
July 17, 2026

CHAD

1.a. Dental care for low-income children

- **ND HeadStart: Challenges addressing dental care for children age 3-5**
  - Requires establishing a dental home within 30 days
  - Requires a dental exam within 90 days
  - Complex cases have to travel long distances for care (see also slide on 1.d)
    - ie Grand Forks to Bismarck

- Bridging the Dental Gap provided exams in Dickinson in 2024
  - Willing to travel for exams and help with establishing dental homes
  - Works with Ronald McDonald House Charities for mobile dental services

- Ronald McDonald House Charities Bismarck will provide housing for complex cases that often have to travel to Bismarck to see a pediatric specialist

Opportunity: Support mobile dental clinics and public health dental partnerships with more funding.

1.a. Dental care for all children

- **SealND!**
  - Increases access to preventative dental services
  - Services Provided
    - Oral health screening
    - Dental sealants
    - Fluoride varnish applications
    - Oral health education
    - Referrals for follow-up care
  - Services provided by HHS staff and dental partners
  - Supported by grants from CDC and HRSA
    - Uncertainty about federal grant continuation
  - FQHCs currently partner with ND HHS Oral Health Program as providers
  - Preventative care helps prevent complex dental cases

Opportunity: Funding to support stabilizing SEALND! program.
Opportunity: Increase SealND! reimbursement rates.

1.d. Access to Complex Dental Services

- **Complex dental cases that require anesthesia**
  - Common for individuals with disabilities and complex dental cases
- **Dental providers without privilege to access operating rooms**
  - Lower reimbursement rates than medical procedures
  - Medical facilities fully utilize their spaces

Opportunity: Fund projects to increase access and improve reimbursement rates.

1.f. Expanding Education

- **Student Loan Repayment is a helpful recruitment tool for FQHCs**
  - ND Health Service Corps (ND HHS Primary Care Office)
    - **Dental Student Loan Repayment:** available to dentists with $100,000 for 5 year commitment, no employer match required.
    - **ND Federal Loan Repayment (Formerly SLRP):** available to dentist and hygienists up to $50,000 for 2 years with a 50/50 employer match required. Must work in a HPSA
  - **National Health Service Corps** (NHSC) available through HRSA to dentists and hygienists up to $75,000 for 2 years working at an NHSC approved site.
  - American Dental Association Report:
    - Dental Student Loan Repayment Programs and Resources (includes list by state)

Opportunity: Increase investment in the Dental Student Loan Repayment program.

1.f. Expanding Education

- **Partnerships with regional dental schools**
  - 4th year dental student rotations
  - Family HealthCare and Bridging the Dental Gap are both trying to expand rotations
  - Spectra Health has a history of participation in rotations
  - Northland's Dental Director is mentor with U of MN Rural Careers in Dentistry program
  - Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)
    - Opportunities for tuition reimbursement

- **Dental residency programs**
  - RIDE - UW School of Dentistry
  - FQHCs are interested in dental residency programs

Opportunity: Financial support for dental student rotations.
Opportunity: Support tuition and reciprocity agreements with dental schools.
Opportunity: Explore partnerships with dental schools for dental residency programs.

1.f. Expanding Education

- **Consideration of a dental school**
  - What does it take to start a dental school? | American Dental Association
  - Texas Tech Woody L. Hunt School of Dental Medicine opened in 2021
  - TTUHSC-El-Paso_Dental-School.pdf
  - Beyond the capacity of the coalition to provide enough information
  - No consensus among our members to support or oppose

Recommendation: If State decides to explore a dental school, we recommend studying the feasibility.

1.g. On-the-job Training and Apprenticeships for Dental Assistants

- Three levels of dental assistants in ND:
  - **Dental Assistants** can perform limited dental assisting functions
    - 12 hours of curriculum + 10 months training
  - **Qualified Dental Assistants** (QDA) all limited DA functions + take dental radiographs
    - On-the-job experience and pass the Dental Assisting National Board (DANB) certification
  - **Registered Dental Assistant** (RDA) QDA functions + expanded
    - Can apply with additional training and testing to; place sealants, perform restorative functions and anesthesia duties

1.g. On-the-job Training and Apprenticeships for Dental Assistants

- FQHCs are using a combination of online learning and on-the-job training for DAs
- ND Dental Foundation Dental Assistant Grant Reimbursement
  - Reimbursement for DA Prep course, DANB prep course, DANB exam reimbursement
  - Curriculum + on-the-job training
  - Max reimbursement of $1,250 per individual student

- What goes into on-the-job training:
  - 12 hours of curriculum for students
  - Approximately 10-12 months of chairside training before fully functional in role
  - Organization training is supporting:
    - Time of preceptors/staff to conduct training
    - Cost to pay apprentices while they are learning

Opportunity: Fully fund dental assistant apprenticeships, possibly using Department of Labor funds.
Opportunity: Stipends for preceptors doing the on-the-job training.

1.j. State and Tribal Partnerships

- Smiles Network International possible partnership with Standing Rock
  - Week-long event
  - Use Tribe facilities
  - Smiles Network International help coordinate dental staff and provide supplies
- Considerations:
  - IHS is challenging for private partnerships due to Government Regulations
  - Easier for Tribes to partner with private entities
  - Tribes pay a better rate for services than IHS
  - IHS payments are close to Medicaid rates
- Oyate Health Center Dental Expansion, Rapid City, SD
  - Opportunity to learn more about their success

Opportunity: Increase appropriations for mobile units such as RMHC Care Mobile and support. partnerships with organizations such as Smiles Network International.
Opportunity: Scholarships for Tribal members to pursue dental careers.

1.t. Medicaid Expansion Dental Benefit

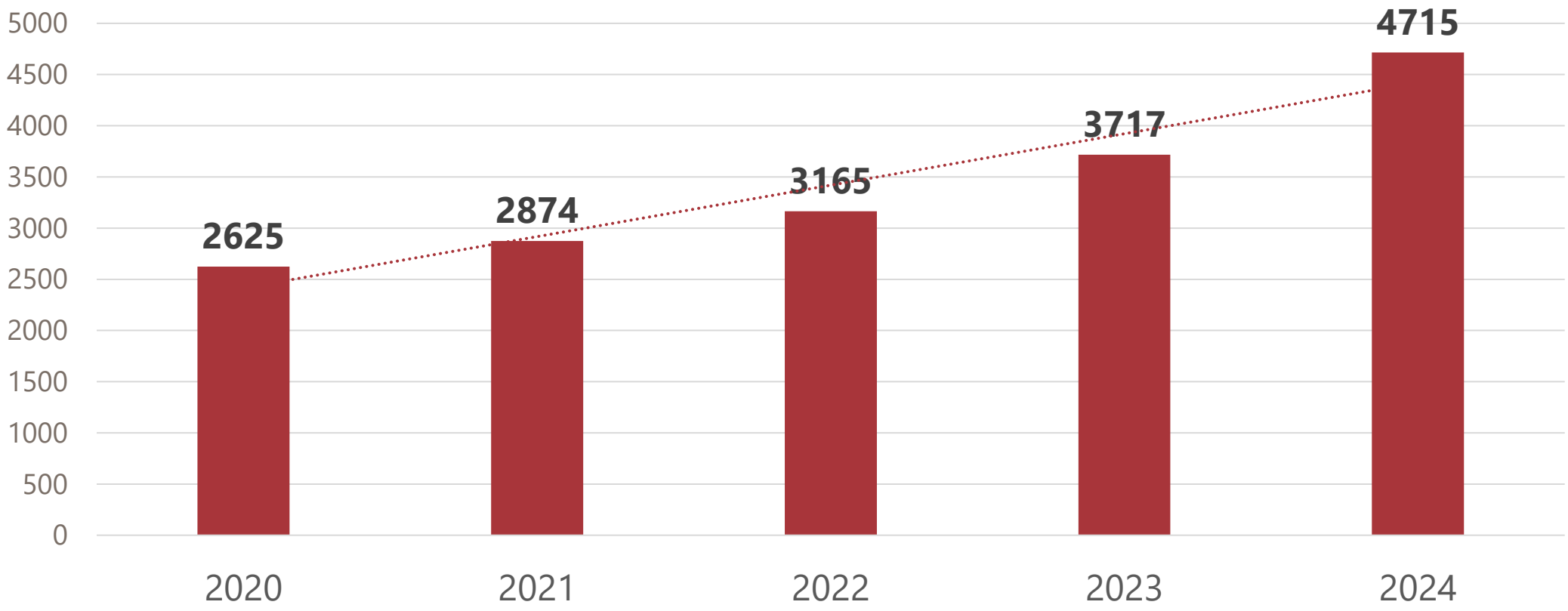
- Lack of coverage for preventative care leads to costlier health risks and treatments
  - Report: CareQuest_Institute_Dental-Care-in-Crisis_10.31.25.pdf
  - Average cost of Non-Traumatic Dental Conditions (NTDC) Emergency Department visits nationwide in 2022 was $2,437.00
- FQHCs are already providing care to Expansion patients with no reimbursement available
- Untreated oral health pain impacts productivity

SB 2231

- SB 2231 introduced in 2025 by Senator Lee to add a dental benefit to Medicaid Expansion
- CHAD supported
- Coalition members were engaged representing their organization positions
- Passed the Senate, failed in the House

Opportunity: Add a dental benefit for Medicaid Expansion.

Number of Tooth Pain Events by Year
North Dakota
2020-2024



Source: North Dakota ESSENCE (2020-2024 ED Tooth Pain Relates Visits as of 1/24/2025)

3. Additional Provider Types

- Dental Therapists
  - 2017 Report The Case for Licensing Dental Therapists in North Dakota
  - Published by: Heartland Institute and Texas Public Policy Foundation
- Community Health Workers
  - Opportunity to provide oral health education

ND Oral Health Coalition Opportunity

- The ND Oral Health Coalition
  - Currently supported with 30% FTE at CHAD
  - 60-70 member organizations
  - Coalition continues to build momentum

- To ensure sustainable long-term oral health work
  - Fund 1 FTE for the Oral Health Coalition
  - Support the ND HHS Oral Health Program



Opportunity: Fund full-time Oral Health Coalition position.

Recommendations

1. Add dental benefit to Medicaid Expansion
2. Fund projects and increase reimbursement rate for complex dental cases (anesthesia, etc.)
3. Increase dental student loan reimbursement rates
4. Reimbursement for preceptors for student rotations (dental, hygiene, assistants)
5. Fund a full time ND Oral Health Coalition position

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North Dakota Oral Health Coalition





Thank you!



Oral Health Study

Interim Health Care Committee | Representative McLeod, Chair
February 12, 2026

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Community HealthCare Association of the Dakota (CHAD)
Facilitator of ND Oral Health Coalition

WHAT WE BELIEVE

As the **Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas**, we believe that everyone has a right to high-quality, reliable, affordable health care, regardless of where they live. We work with health centers, community leaders, and partners to increase access and improve health care services in areas of the Dakotas that need it most.

WHO WE ARE

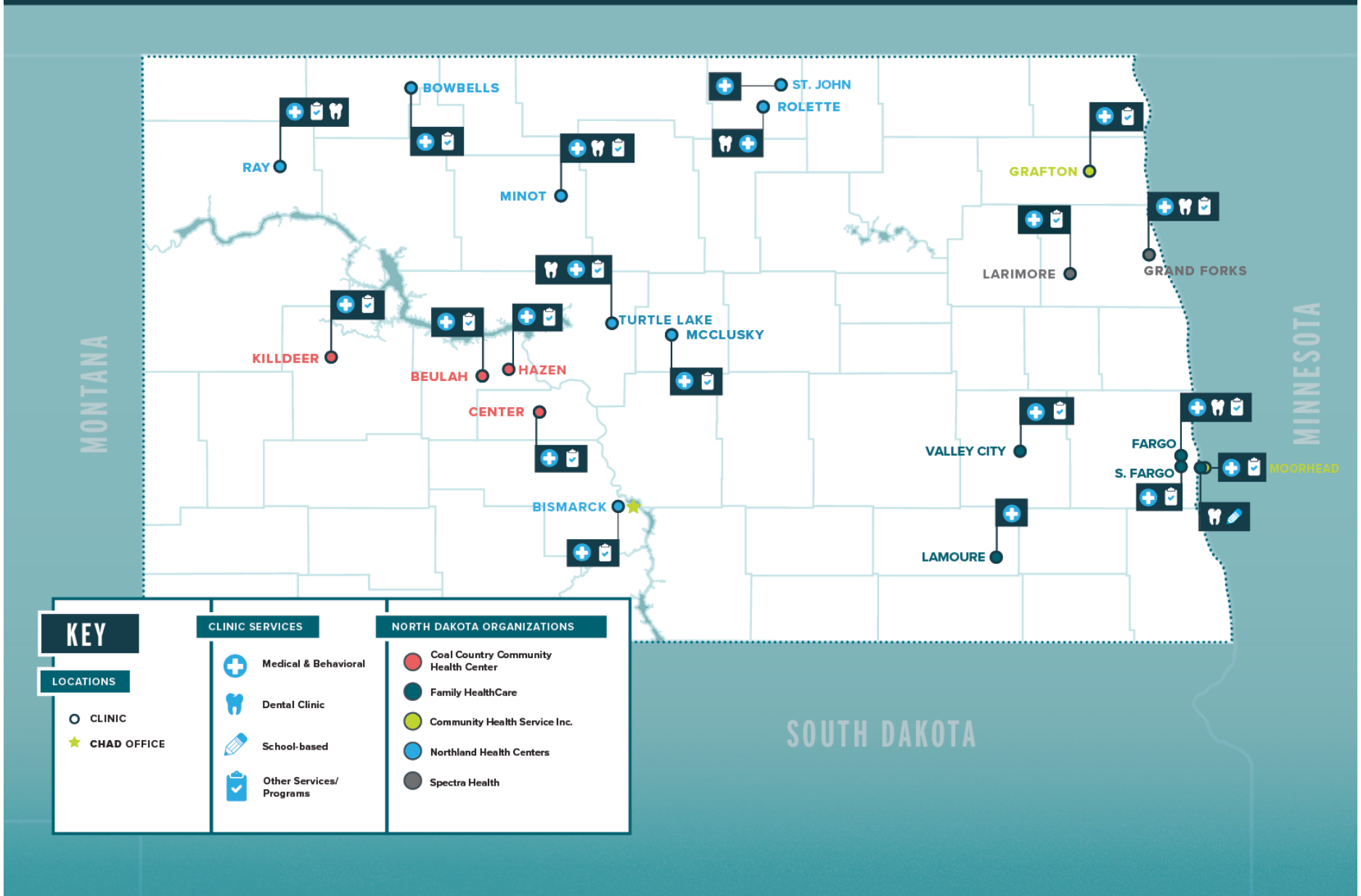
CHAD supports community health centers (CHCs) in their mission to provide access to health care for all Dakotans regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.

CHAD and Oral Health

- Representing 5 FQHCs (community health centers) in North Dakota
  - 4 health center members in ND have dental clinics at one or more locations
- In 2024, health centers served 10,652 dental patients with 22,430 visits
  - Regardless of insurance status or ability to pay
- CHAD Receives ND HHS block grant
  - Funds approximately 30% FTE to facilitate the ND Oral Health Coalition
  - External Affairs Manager is 25% FTE
  - Marketing, website maintenance, administration remaining 5%
- CHAD also gives in-kind support for
  - Advocacy
  - Additional hours and items not funded by block grant
- The ND Oral Health Coalition aligns with the mission of CHAD

CHAD
Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER LOCATIONS



Coalition Mission Statement:

To foster collaborative solutions to achieve better oral health outcomes for all.

Coalition Purpose Statement:

To coordinate partners and organizations throughout the state of North Dakota to create collective impact by improving oral health outcomes. This proposed work focuses long-term on increasing access to oral health, improving North Dakotans' oral health literacy, and developing integration between all professions impacted by oral health.

ND Oral Health
COALITION


CHAD
Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas


FAMILY
HealthCare


Northland
HealthCenters


Spectra
HEALTH


Bridging
THE DENTAL GAP


NORTH
Dakota
Be Legendary.
Health & Human Services
Health Promotion & Chronic Disease Prevention
Oral Health Program


NORTH
Dakota
Be Legendary.
Health & Human Services
Medical Services Division


NORTH
Dakota
Be Legendary.
Health & Human Services
Health Promotion & Chronic Disease Prevention
Primary Care Office


North Dakota
DENTAL ASSOCIATION


NORTH
Dakota
Be Legendary.
Indian Affairs


NORTH
Dakota
Be Legendary.
Health & Human Services
Head Start


NDDPI
NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION


NORTH DAKOTA
Dental Foundation


Ronald McDonald
House Charities
Bismarck, ND
Keeping families close ™


UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH DAKOTA
School of Medicine & Health Sciences
Department of Indigenous Health


Quality Health Associates
of North Dakota


Third Street
CLINIC


FAMILY VOICES
OF NORTH DAKOTA
Navigating Crossroads to Hope


ND Oral Health
COALITION



ND Oral Health Coalition

- Steering Committee has 26 members guiding the coalition
  - Meets in odd numbered months (i.e. November, January, March, etc.)
- General membership consists of 60 – 70 members at any one time
  - Meetings open to all members in even numbered months (i.e. December, February, April, etc.)
- Annual membership meetings (September)
- Informal coalition structure

ND Oral Health
COALITION

ND Oral Health Coalition



- Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas (CHAD)
  - ND HHS block grant to facilitate
  - 30% FTE to facilitate the coalition
  - In-kind services such as lobbying
- CHAD responsible to:
  - Convene coalition members and facilitate coalition meetings
  - Identify and foster collaboration on 2-3 key initiatives determined by coalition members & partners
  - Report on coalition workplan progress
  - Represent and promote the coalition
  - Create & maintain a website for the coalition
  - Communicate with coalition members
- **The ND Oral Health Coalition does not conduct lobbying activity**

ND Oral Health
COALITION

NDOHC Action Plan/Strategic Plan



Goal 1: Increase access to dental care for Medicaid members

Goal 2: Create a sample business/access model that enables hygienists to practice at top of scope and receive reimbursement in community-based outreach

Goal 3: Identify and recommend systemic solutions to the dental workforce crisis

ND Oral Health COALITION

Identified Impact Areas

Access	Support dental student rotations at FQHCs and look-a-likes
Workforce	Increase loan repayment amounts for dentists, rural communities, and hygienists
Workforce	Support student recruitment for dental hygiene and dental assistant programs
Access	Recruit dentist for Ray Urgent Dental Clinic
Access	Allow dental therapy - There are differing opinions among coalition members on this
Access	Add dental benefit to Medicaid Expansion
Access	Pilot private practices holding events for Medicaid patients
Access/Workforce	Identify dental partners to collaborate with outreach projects for schools (SealND! and career presentations)

ND Oral Health COALITION

Making Progress Together

- **Expanding Access**
  - Northland Health Center Ray Urgent Dental Clinic opens
  - BSC Mystic Smiles Pediatric Dental Clinic opens

- **2025 Legislative Session**
  - Created coalition communication list for education
  - Coalition members engaged in Legislative session
  - Legislature passes Oral Health Study
  - Legislature defeats statewide water fluoridation ban
  - Coalition distributed Oral Health in North Dakota Report



ND Oral Health COALITION

Making Progress Together

- **Billing/Coding**
  - ND Medicaid launches Procedure Code Lookup Tool
  - Upcoming changes in ND Medicaid service authorizations

- **Workforce & Education**
  - Dakota College Bottineau – Minot Campus
    - First Dental Assistant students in 2024
    - First Dental Hygiene students in 2025
  - Bismarck State College
    - First Dental Assistant students in 2025
  - Dental Student Recruitment Trip
  - Continue and expand 4th year dental student rotations

ND Oral Health COALITION