ADA CGA Report

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## FEDERAL AND D.C. UPDATE

### *Medicaid and CMS*

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is urging states to accelerate Medicaid provider revalidation efforts. Delays in the revalidation process could create significant administrative burdens for Medicaid dental providers, including enrollment delays, provider directory inaccuracies, and potential payment disruptions.

### *Federal Legislation*

The Action for Dental Health legislation is scheduled for markup tomorrow, with advocates hopeful the bill will advance to the House floor.

The Partners Act is also gaining attention and will likely receive support. The legislation would strengthen state authority to enforce existing Medicare Advantage requirements.

ERISA reform efforts currently have eight congressional co-sponsors, though additional support is needed to advance the initiative.

The appropriations process remains extremely slow, increasing the possibility of a continuing resolution (CR) and potential government shutdown concerns later this year.

### *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*

President Trump has recommended Dr. Erica Schwartz, a military surgeon, to lead the CDC. She has not yet been confirmed.

### *Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)*

HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. recently testified regarding the department's budget and policy priorities. Lawmakers raised concerns surrounding:

- Medicaid and Affordable Care Act (ACA) coverage changes
- Vaccine and immunization policy shifts
- Chronic disease initiatives
- Drug pricing
- Agency staffing levels

A major reorganization within HHS is anticipated, though details remain unclear.

Regarding dental funding:

- Indian Health Services (IHS) and the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) are expected to receive increased dental funding.
- Funding levels for most other programs are expected to remain flat.

The ADA collaborated with partner organizations to advocate for increased IHS funding, including support for:

- Loan repayment programs for providers
- Housing assistance
- Medical and dental equipment funding

Additionally, there is currently a temporary Surgeon General serving in the role.

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**STATE GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**

***Insurance Reform***

ADA's ongoing insurance reform priorities are:

- Fee transparency for both buyers and payors
- ERISA-related advocacy efforts
- Rollover benefits initiatives beginning in Georgia
- Network adequacy standards
- A provider bill of rights and clearer insurer communication

Missouri signed non-covered services legislation into law, becoming the 45th state to adopt this policy.

Additional insurance reform victories include:

- Oklahoma passing reimbursement-related reforms
- Kentucky passing non-covered services legislation
- Colorado adopted opt-in leasing reforms

***Workforce Expanded Function Dental Assistants (EFDAs)***

Several states continue exploring workforce expansion models, particularly Expanded Function Dental Assistants (EFDAs) and Oral Preventive Assistants (OPAs).

Key updates include:

- Missouri permanently approved its EFDA/OPA pilot program
- Nevada is preparing a report on a similar proposal
- Virginia passed EFDA/OPA legislation

Many of these initiatives involve on-the-job training models designed to address workforce shortages and improve access to care.

Additional workforce developments include:

- Scaling assistant and OPA programs
- Licensure discussions for foreign-trained dentists as hygienists in Virginia and Indiana

There continues to be professional tension between organized dentistry and independent dental hygiene groups, particularly surrounding independent hygiene practice models. While many independent hygiene proposals are unlikely to pass legislatively, they remain challenging from an interprofessional standpoint.

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**ADA LOBBY DAY**

This year's ADA Lobby Day demonstrated strong engagement:

- 524 attendees
- Representation from 46 states
- 327 congressional meetings conducted
- $94,000 raised during Lobby Day efforts

Survey feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, though attendance from dental students was lower than in previous years.

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**JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE (JSC) UPDATES**

There are currently four Joint Subcommittees (JSCs) involving Council on Government Affairs participation:

- Public Insurance
- Private/Commercial Insurance
- Workforce
- Policy Review

***Public Insurance***

The committee continues advocating for a Medicare dental benefit, though concerns remain regarding the structure and implementation of current proposed models.

***Commercial Insurance***

Major priorities include:

- Greater fee transparency
- Closing the loop on ERISA reform
- Rollover benefits
- Network adequacy
- A provider bill of rights
- Improved communication standards from insurers

***Workforce (WF)***

<u>Policy Review</u>

The Workforce Committee is reviewing policies related to artificial intelligence (AI) and teledentistry. Members emphasized that with rapid technological advances, dentistry must establish clear guidelines for appropriate implementation and oversight.

One major concern involves insurance claims review processes, specifically ensuring that human oversight remains involved when claims are denied.

<u>Workforce Development and Pipeline Programs</u>

A new pilot program will connect HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) students with Planet Smilez and the ACE curriculum to introduce students to careers in oral healthcare.

**HOSA** continues to represent a major opportunity for dental workforce recruitment:

- Approximately 300,000 students participate nationally
- Many participants already express interest in healthcare professions
- ADA has established connections with HOSA at the national level
- Competitions focused on dental instrument recognition and terminology
- ADEA has also expressed support for these efforts.

**California Dental Association** has the CDA Dental Assisting Bootcamp, which includes:

- Five weeks of online learning
- Twelve weeks of in-office clinical training

The CDA is exploring opportunities to expand the program into additional states. The organization is also considering offering the online educational component independently for approximately $250 per participant.

CDA representatives emphasized that the program provides accessible, structured training pathways to help address workforce shortages while supporting dental practices in training new team members efficiently.

**New Hampshire Qualified Dental Assisting Program (QDAP)** is a competency-based training and certification pathway designed to prepare dental assistants through direct practice experience.

The program allows dental assistants to become certified through on-the-job training under the supervision of a licensed dentist. Participants must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Work with a supervising dentist
- Obtain dentist verification and sign-off throughout the program

The curriculum is structured around state board requirements and includes seven educational modules:

1. Infection control
2. Preliminary oral inspection

3. Coronal polishing
4. Temporary restorations
5. Sealants
6. Nitrous oxide monitoring
7. Radiology

Each module carries an individual fee, typically a few hundred dollars, and participants complete a final examination before receiving certification from the supervising dentist.

Program administrators noted that the initiative requires substantial support from dental society administrative teams but also provides an opportunity for non-dues revenue generation.

During the 2025–2026 cycle, approximately 100 students completed the QDAP program.

Presenters also discussed New Hampshire's unique regulatory structure:

- The New Hampshire Board of Dental Examiners licenses dentists and dental hygienists through the state
- Dental assisting certification is largely optional, except for required radiology preparation coursework