



Dental Cuts in the State Budget – Over 3 MILLION people affected

Governor Schwarzenegger's 2008-09 budget would affect dental care by:

- Eliminating non-emergency dental care for nearly all adults on Medi-Cal, including pregnant women and individuals with developmental disabilities, affecting over three million adults.
- Imposing a \$1000 annual cap on non-emergency dental care in the Healthy Families program, affecting an estimated 42,000 children at current enrollment levels.

Access to dental care is extremely important, not just for the teeth but for overall health. Dental problems are linked to preterm birth, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes; in addition, oral cancer, HIV and other diseases can be detected at dental visits.

Eliminating non-emergency dental care for adults, except adults in nursing homes

- Adults in Denti-Cal (the dental program for Medi-Cal) already have a limit of \$1800 of (non-emergency) services per year. For dental services above this cap, people are forced to borrow to pay the additional costs, wait until the following year, or go without necessary dental care.
- If dental care is eliminated for adults under Medi-Cal, the Department of Developmental Services would need to provide certain dental services for developmentally disabled adults at 100% state cost. This required expenditure has not been included in the dental "savings".
- Pregnant women need access to dental cleanings and other basic dental care; the lack of such care is linked to increased preterm labor and delivery and low birthweight infants (see www.mchaccess.org for articles and materials). Already, in one recent state study, over 40% of pregnant women on Medi-Cal said they had an oral health problem during pregnancy but didn't visit a dentist or dental clinic.
- When adults lose dental coverage, studies show their children are less likely to see a dentist, even when insured.

Imposing a \$1000 cap on dental services for children in Healthy Families

- The Surgeon General's 2000 report highlighted dental disease as the most common chronic disease of childhood, five times more prevalent than asthma.
- Oral health problems are the number one reason children miss school in Los Angeles Unified School District
- Healthy Families is expected to serve over 950,000 children in 2008. The program estimates that 5% of these kids would reach the benefit caps. This means some 47,500 children would "likely need to spread services over more than one year", imposing pain and suffering on children or the need for their families to pay out of pocket for dental costs they can't afford.
- MCHA already sees problems with predatory, high-interest lending for dental care in Los Angeles and don't want to see children wait until their next benefit year to finish needed procedures. These potential dental costs will be in addition to increased premiums and co-payments for many families in the Healthy Families program.