

Children's Oral Health Has Suffered During COVID-19

No child should have to suffer from dental pain and infection made worse because of a lack of services due to the pandemic

LD 1501 *An Act to Protect Oral Health for Children in Maine* will help ensure all children can get the dental care they need

Kids are going without dental care during the pandemic

By Jen Rose Smith, CNN

Updated 12:16 AM ET, Mon February 15, 2021

Some parents were unable to get their kids in to see the dentist at all. Among families with private dental insurance who sought care, 4% were unable to secure an appointment. That shoots up to 15% for families whose children rely on Medicaid coverage, who are more likely to be Black, multiracial or Latino than their counterparts with private insurance.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/15/health/kids-missing-dental-care-pandemic-wellness/index.html>

Dental care is kids' No. 1 unmet health need during pandemic

By Theresa Pablos, DrBicuspid.com editor in chief

February 9, 2021 -- Dental care topped the list of children's unmet healthcare needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a study published on February 6 in the *Journal of the American Dental Association*. That risk was even higher for children whose parents lost a job or income.

<https://www.drBicuspid.com/index.aspx?sec=ser&sub=def&pag=dis&ItemID=328050>

The pandemic has made it harder to see a dentist; caused many household incomes to plummet, making it harder to afford healthy food and dental care supplies; and reduced the limited oral health services some children were getting in schools.

Number of Dental Claims - Maine

| | Commercial | MaineCare |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| January - June 2019 | 257,688 | 46,198 |
| January - June 2020 | 162,785 | 21,571 |
| # Fewer claims in first half of 2020 | 94,903 | 24,627 |
| Percentage Decrease | 37% | 53% |

<https://mhdo.maine.gov/tableau/data.cshtml#> Accessed 12/12/20

There is a backlog of need among Maine's children for core preventive oral health services, and fewer people are getting oral health care because of the pandemic – especially MaineCare members.

Some children are fortunate to receive preventive oral health care in their school, but fewer schools are participating than in previous years. The hygienists who provide this care in schools are reporting much higher rates of decay in children this year.

Maine is doing so much to help mitigate the cascading impact of missed classes and services for children. Oral health cannot be left out of this rebuilding effort.

LD 1501 will have a significant impact on our children's health and lifetime success in return for modest state investment.



Partnership for Children's Oral Health

A network to ensure that all children in Maine can grow up free from preventable dental disease