



Feb. 14, 2011

Rep. Eileen Cody
101 Modular Building F
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
eileen.cody@leg.wa.gov

Dear Rep. Cody,

Thank you for showing the foresight to include expanded access to oral health care on your legislative agenda for the current session. The Washington State Oral Health Coalition has worked continually since its inception in 1993 to improve access and capacity for oral health service delivery. The Coalition is a 501(c)3 organization that promotes the importance of oral health care and advocates for expanded access to such care for all of Washington's residents.*

Oral health care or, more accurately, the lack of oral health care is an issue of significant concern at the local, state, and national levels. It is an issue to state and federal governments, an issue to universities and foundations, an issue to dental professionals, and most certainly an issue to people who are without care.

Although dental care is mandated for children who receive Medicaid, more than 62% of these children did not receive any such care in 2009. (Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report: *Efforts Under Way to Improve Children's Access to Dental Services, but Sustained Attention Needed to Address Ongoing Concerns*, Nov. 2010)

- Current population of the United States is an estimated 311,904,000. (*Census 2010*)
- More than 50 million receive Medicaid coverage. (*USA Today*, Richard Wolf)
- The apportionment population for Washington State is 6,753,369 (*Office of Financial Management (OFM) Washington State, Census 2010*)
- The combined adult/child Medicaid population of Washington State was 1,207,383 in Sept. 2010: 484,831 adults and 722,552 children. (*Health and Rehabilitation Services Administration Report Number: 10422*)

More than 1 in every 6 counted residents of Washington State is a person on Medicaid. All 722,552 children on Medicaid are assured dental coverage as part of Title XIX; **yet at least 450,000 of our Medicaid kids went without dental care in 2009, according to the GAO report.** Nor is our Medicaid population the only group going without dental care. People who can afford to pay for care but are unable to find a dental office willing to see them due to distance, institutional living, or physical disability are equally excluded from traditional dental care.

As a Coalition, we applaud your efforts to raise the priority of oral health care to state lawmakers and to find inclusive solutions that meet the needs of our state's highly diverse population.

Best regards,

Cyndi Newman, Chair
Washington State Oral Health Coalition

*The Washington State Oral Health Coalition promotes the importance of oral health care and advocates

for expanded access to this care for all of Washington's residents. WSOHC is

- An active network for oral health and related professionals and organizations
- A collaborative environment for improving oral health education and access to care
- A platform for informed debate of oral health issues
- A working partnership to create resources for oral health education and promotion