



Medi-Cal Coverage to Smile About

More than a third of Californians receive health care through Medi-Cal, and while most members know that dental coverage is included, many do not use the benefit.

The Medi-Cal Dental Program is working to change that with *Smile, California*, a new campaign to increase dental visits among eligible members and increase the number of children receiving preventive services and molar sealants.

Medi-Cal Dental covers routine, preventive and restorative care for more than 13.5 million members in California, but less than half of children and only about 20 percent of adults use these services each year.

Earlier this year, Medi-Cal conducted a study of more than 2,600 parents of child members to uncover why they are not taking full advantage of their child's dental benefit.

"Parents told us they want to help their children be healthy, but need more information about covered services," said Alani Jackson, Chief of the Medi-Cal Dental Services Division within the California Department of Health Care Services.

Through *Smile, California*, members can learn about free and low-cost dental services and how to tap into the network of more than 10,000 Medi-Cal dental providers to find a dentist.

The new campaign website and materials will deliver the facts on the Medi-Cal dental benefit and connect members to care through the provider database. Members can also call the customer service line at 1-800-322-6384.

Smile, California will use social media, direct mail and community events to help members learn about oral health needs at every age and promote the importance of routine dental appointments for a healthy mouth.

"Regular checkups and cleanings save time and money and reduce your risk of more serious problems," explains Jackson.

Medi-Cal includes free checkups every six months for children and every 12 months for adult members ages 21 and older.

But Jackson says member education is only half of the equation for increased use of dental services.

To meet the increasing demand for dental services, the campaign is working to expand the provider network and pursuing alternatives like teledentistry to bring care to more communities in California.

"More providers seeing more patients will quickly add up to healthier smiles across California."

For more information, visit SmileCalifornia.org.