

# the burden of oral disease

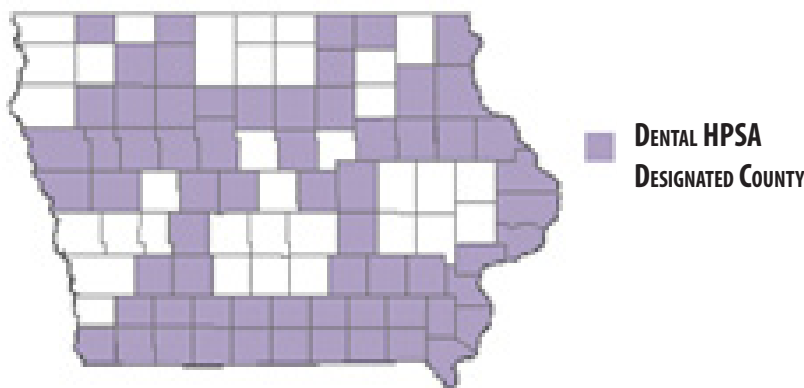
Access to Oral Health Services in Iowa

## Dental Professionals in Iowa

In 2015, there were 1,556 dentists practicing in Iowa.<sup>1</sup> The population to dentist ratio for the state in 2015 was 2,007:1.<sup>1</sup> In 2013, there were approximately 1,647 dental hygienists practicing in Iowa.<sup>2</sup> Of the 99 counties in Iowa, 19 counties had two or fewer dentists and 28 counties had two or fewer dental hygienists.<sup>1-2</sup>

Dentists in Iowa are not evenly distributed across the state. The population to dentist ratio in Iowa's counties range from 885:1 in Johnson County to 9133:1 in Palo Alto County. In 2015, a total of 10 Iowa counties had population to dentist ratios greater than 5000:1. This uneven distribution has resulted in certain areas of Iowa being designated as dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs).<sup>1</sup>

## DENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE AREAS



Source: Health Resources and Services Administration 2015  
Health Professional Shortage Areas are counties with at least one area designated as having an inadequate number of dentists to serve their dental needs.

## Loan Repayment Program

Loan repayment programs incentivize dentists to practice in dental HPSAs. The Delta Dental Loan Repayment Program offers an eligible dentist \$50,000 over three years to be used for educational debt in exchange for practicing in a dental HPSA and providing 35% of services to underserved populations.<sup>5-6</sup> The Fulfilling Iowa's Need for Dentists (FIND) Loan Repayment Program is a variation of the Delta Dental Loan Repayment Program in which communities that are seeking a dentist also contribute funding. In this program, dentists receive up to \$100,000 to be used for education loan debt over a five year period.<sup>5</sup>

The Primary Care Recruitment and Retention Endeavor (PRIMECARRE) program is Iowa's state loan repayment program. It was authorized by the Iowa Legislature in 1994 to improve health care access, and it offers loan repayment assistance to qualified primary care providers. Dentists and dental hygienists are among the professionals eligible for this program. For primary care and dental providers willing to practice for two years in a public or non-profit site designated as a HPSA, grants are available at up to \$50,000 per year.<sup>7</sup> Twelve applicants were selected to receive funding in 2017.

## Dental Education in Iowa

Iowa has one school that offers a Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) degree. The University of Iowa College of Dentistry and Dental Clinics enrolls approximately 80 new students annually.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the DDS degree, this college offers 12 graduate specialty programs.<sup>4</sup> The University of Iowa is a large supplier of Iowa dentists. Of the 1,556 Iowa dentists in 2015, 77.8% were graduates of the University of Iowa College of Dentistry and Dental Clinics.<sup>1</sup>

Iowa also has five schools that award associate degrees in dental hygiene. These schools include Iowa Western Community College, Kirkwood Community College, Iowa Central Community College, Hawkeye Community College, and Des Moines Area Community College. Approximately 91 students graduate from these programs each year.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Allen College awards a bachelor of health science degree in dental hygiene.

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## Public Health Supervision Agreements

In Iowa, dental hygienists with at least three years of clinical experience can enter into a Public Health Supervision Agreement with a dentist.<sup>8</sup> These agreements allow dental hygienists to provide oral screenings, fluoride varnish and sealant applications, and oral health education to patients in public health settings. The provision of these services includes a referral to a dentist. In 2015, 104 dental hygienists performed services in public health settings under a Public Health Supervision Agreement.<sup>8</sup>

Through public health settings such as school-based programs, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Head Start programs, federal public health programs, and others, dental hygienists under public health supervision provided over 78,000 oral screenings, over 55,000 fluoride varnish applications, over 46,000 sealant applications, and over 58,000 referrals to dentists in 2015.<sup>8</sup>

## Dental Insurance in Iowa

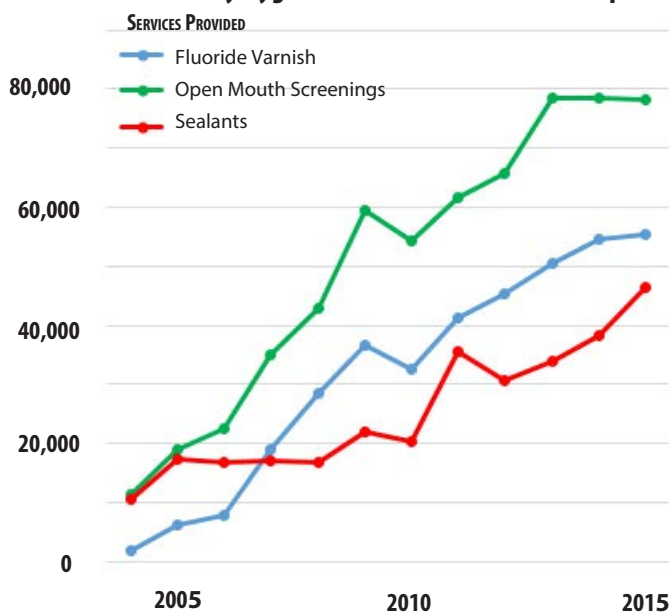
Iowa provides dental insurance benefits to low-income children and adolescents under 21 years through the Medicaid program Care for Kids.<sup>9</sup> Children enrolled in Medicaid receive services based on the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) program guidelines.<sup>9</sup> Dental benefits include routine exams, preventive services such as fluoride varnishes and sealants, and medically necessary diagnostic and treatment services.<sup>9</sup> In 2015, 323,835 Iowa children ages 0-20 years were eligible for Medicaid. Of those, 52% received a dental or oral health service.<sup>10</sup>



Iowa also provides insurance coverage through the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).<sup>12</sup> Iowa's CHIP program is titled Healthy and Well Kids in Iowa (**hawk-i**), and it provides dental benefits to qualifying children aged 0-20 years.<sup>11</sup> In Iowa, children without private dental insurance and from families with incomes too high for Medicaid eligibility have the opportunity to enroll in the dental-only option of **hawk-i**.<sup>11</sup>

On May 1, 2014, Iowa began a new dental insurance program for low-income adults as part of Medicaid expansion. Titled the Dental Wellness Plan, this insurance option allows adults aged 19-64 and with household incomes between 0 and 133% of the federal poverty level to receive comprehensive dental benefits.<sup>13</sup> This provided many previously uninsured adults access to diagnostic, preventive, and emergency dental care.<sup>13</sup>

Services Provided by Hygienists Under Public Health Supervision



Source: Routine IDPH program data

Includes services provided under public health supervision of a dentist, as reported by Registered Dental Hygienists.

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*Fact sheet references and additional information can be found at <https://idph.iowa.gov/ohds/oral-health-center/reports>*