

# The National Rural Health Association

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## The National Rural Oral Health Initiative

The National Rural Oral Health Initiative, a collaboration between the National Rural Health Association and the CareQuest Institute, aims to address oral health disparities in rural America. Proudly entering Year 5 of the initiative.

The collaborative efforts prioritize Policy, Communications, Education, and Research to raise awareness and prioritize person-centered care. This initiative aims to improve access to quality oral health care in rural communities and connect groups with necessary resources for patient assistance.

## Status of Oral Care in Tennessee

**39.9%**  
of children in Tennessee are covered by Medicaid/CHIP

**80%**  
is the amount of people that have had at least one cavity by age 34 in Tennessee.

**92.7%**  
of all eligible children participate in Medicaid/CHIP.

**59.7%**  
of adults ages 18+ have visited a dentist or dental clinic in 2020.

**Medicaid**  
Tennessee has **NOT** accepted federal funding to expand Medicaid under the ACA.

**20%**  
of the Tennessee population is covered by Medicaid/CHIP.

There are 2 public and 1 private dental schools in the state of Tennessee.

**124,000**  
Adults are in the Coverage Gap for access to Medicaid.

All Preventative Services (Cleanings, Fluoride Treatments, Sealants, and Space maintainers) are covered under Medicaid for Children.

## NRHA Rural Oral Policy Objectives

- Address rural declining life expectancy by advocating for increased access to fluoridated water in rural homes and support comprehensive dental programs for veterans. NRHA also calls for policies to improve affordable dental care, eliminate discrimination, and emphasize funding for rural oral health research.
- Reduce rural healthcare workforce shortages through legislation to improve childcare, increased funding for rural development, and housing assistance. Advocate for "Grow your own" programs, and increased funding for the National Health Service Corps.
- Advocate expanding Medicare coverage to include dental services related to conditions like diabetes or cardiovascular disease. Support comprehensive Medicaid dental coverage for all adults, including measures to increase federal matching percentages and promote innovative care delivery systems such as mobile dental units and virtual dental homes, to enhance access to preventative oral care in rural areas.

