

Native Oral Health in Montana

Native Solutions to Native Health

American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) have a strong need for dental care in Montana. Dental therapists can help meet the need.

Native oral health needs

AI/AN children

In the United States, AI/AN children ages 3 to 5 have four times as many cases of untreated tooth decay, when compared to White children.¹

AI/AN adults

More than twice as many AI/AN adult dental patients suffer from untreated tooth decay than the general U.S. population and compared to any other racial or ethnic group.² AI/AN adults are more likely to suffer from periodontal disease and have missing teeth.

Montana's dental care shortage

A need for providers: Montana has 98 dental health professional shortage areas and meets 31% of its population's oral health needs.³

A need for cultural representation: There are seven federally recognized tribes in Montana,⁴ but fewer than 1% of dentists and dental hygienists in Montana are Native.⁵

Limited coverage options

Limited acceptance of Medicaid: About 78,601 AI/ANs live in Montana.⁶ In 2016, just over half (40,102) of AI/ANs in Montana were enrolled in Medicaid, but due to a shortage of providers who accept Medicaid, dental care can be difficult to afford.⁷

Limited access to services provided by Indian Health Service (IHS): Access to IHS services can help cover costs outside Medicaid enrollment, under one third (21,821) of AI/ANs enrolled in Medicaid in Montana also had access to IHS services in 2016.⁸

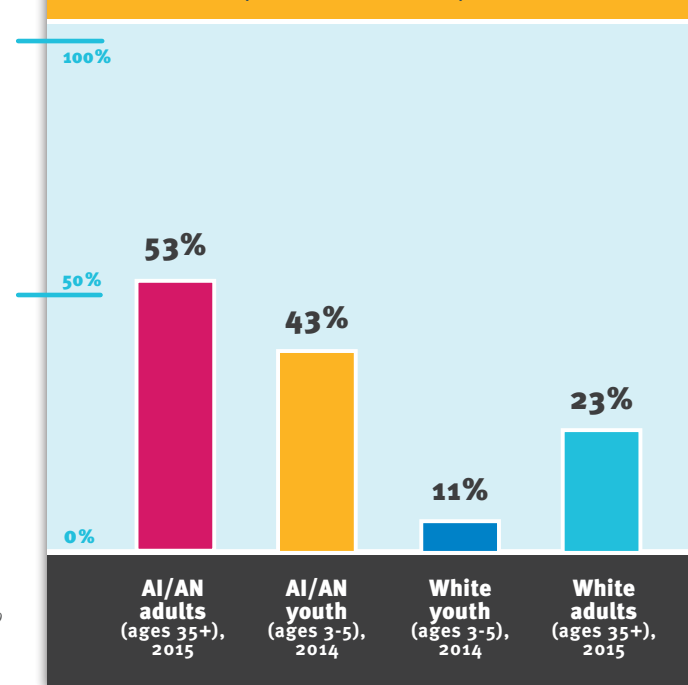
The population without coverage or access: Additionally, under one quarter (17,394) of this population were uninsured in 2016, just under 17% (2,869) of whom also lacked access to IHS services.⁹

Dental therapists – A successful, Native-led solution

Dental therapists provide safe and high-quality care within a limited scope of dental services.

Their services free the dentist to do more advanced procedures for their patients, extending the reach of the dentist-led team. They increase access to oral health in places where it's hard to hire dentists. They are also members of the tribal and urban communities where they work.

Comparison of AI/AN and White youth and adults with untreated tooth decay (2014 and 2015)¹¹



Status on state's authority: Limits and opportunities

House Bill 599 was signed into law on May 9, 2019. Under this law, dental therapists can conduct preventative, but not restorative, procedures under the Community Health Aide Program (CHAP) without a state license. Dental therapists can provide services through IHS, tribal, and urban Indian facilities. The statute that enables this law expires in 2023, but continued negotiations, success stories, and other statistical information may help ensure its renewal.¹⁰

Native dental therapists offer culturally appropriate care, which leads to better outcomes for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Learn more

W.K. Kellogg Foundation dental therapy resource guide: <http://dentaltherapyresourceguide.wkkf.org>

W.K. Kellogg Foundation's video, "Alaska's Dental Therapists Are Bringing Back Smiles": <https://youtu.be/j8IRSp-1PpE>

National Indian Health Board Tribal Oral Health Initiative: <https://www.nihb.org/oralhealthinitiative/index.php>

National Partnership for Dental Therapy: <https://www.dentaltherapy.org>

Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board Native Dental Therapy Initiative: <http://www.npaihb.org/ndti/>

James Madison Institute brief, *Dental Therapists: Sinking Our Teeth into Innovative Workforce Reform*: <https://www.jamesmadison.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/PolicyBrief-DentalTherapy-v07-web.pdf>

¹ Phipps, K.R. & Ricks, T.L. (2015, Apr.). The Oral Health of American Indian and Alaska Native Children Aged 1-5 Years: Results of the 2014 IHS Oral Health Survey. *Indian Health Service Data Brief*. https://www.ihs.gov/doh/documents/IHS_Data_Brief_1-5_Year-Old.pdf

² Phipps, K.R. & Ricks, T.L. (2016, Mar.). The Oral Health of American Indian and Alaska Native Adult Dental Patients: Results of the 2015 IHS Oral Health Survey. *Indian Health Service Data Brief*. https://www.ihs.gov/DOH/documents/IHS_Data_Brief_March_2016_Oral_Health%20Survey_35_plus.pdf

³ Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation. Dental Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), as of December 31, 2018. <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/dental-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

⁴ National Indian Health Board. (2019, May.) *Tribal Dental Therapy Law in Montana*. https://www.nihb.org/docs/states/TOHI%20State%20Legislative%20Tracker%20Bill%20Montana_2019.pdf

⁵ Health Policy Institute. *Racial and Ethnic Diversity among Dentists in the U.S.* https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/Files/HPIgraphic_1117_6.pdf?la=en

⁶ U.S. Census. (n.d.). *The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010*. *2010 Census Briefs*. <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/c2010br-10.pdf>

⁷ Fox, Ed. (2018, Feb.). *Medicaid Enrollment 2010 to 2016 with and without IHS Access*. <https://public.tableau.com/profile/edward.fox#!/vizhome/AIANMedicMedicaidEnrollment2010to2016withandwithoutIHSAccess/MedicaidEnrollmentwithandwithoutAccessstoIHS2010to2016>

⁸ See Endnote 7

⁹ Fox, Ed. (2018, Apr.). *2010 to 2016 Uninsured with and without Access to IHS Access Map*. <https://public.tableau.com/profile/edward.fox#!/vizhome/BothwithandwithoutAccessstoIHS2010to2016/ChangeinUninsured2012and2016withandwithoutIHSaccess>

¹⁰ See Endnote 4

¹¹ See Endnote 2



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