

# Native Oral Health in North Dakota

## Native Solutions to Native Health

American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) have a strong need for dental care in North Dakota. 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.<sup>1</sup>

#### 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.<sup>2</sup> AI/AN adults are more likely to suffer from periodontal disease and have missing teeth.

#### North Dakota's dental care shortage

**A need for providers:** North Dakota has 42 dental health professional shortage areas and meets 33% of its population's oral health needs.<sup>3</sup>

**A need for cultural representation:** There are four federally recognized tribes in North Dakota,<sup>4</sup> but fewer than 1% of dentists and dental hygienists in North Dakota are Native.<sup>5</sup>

#### Limited coverage options

**Limited acceptance of Medicaid:** About 42,996 AI/ANs live in North Dakota.<sup>6</sup> In 2016, nearly half (19,371) of AI/ANs in North Dakota were enrolled in Medicaid, but due to a shortage of providers who accept Medicaid, dental care can be difficult to afford.<sup>7</sup>

**Limited access to services provided by Indian Health Service (IHS):** Access to IHS services can help cover costs outside Medicaid enrollment, but fewer than one third (12,859) of AI/ANs enrolled in Medicaid in North Dakota also had access to IHS services in 2016.<sup>8</sup>

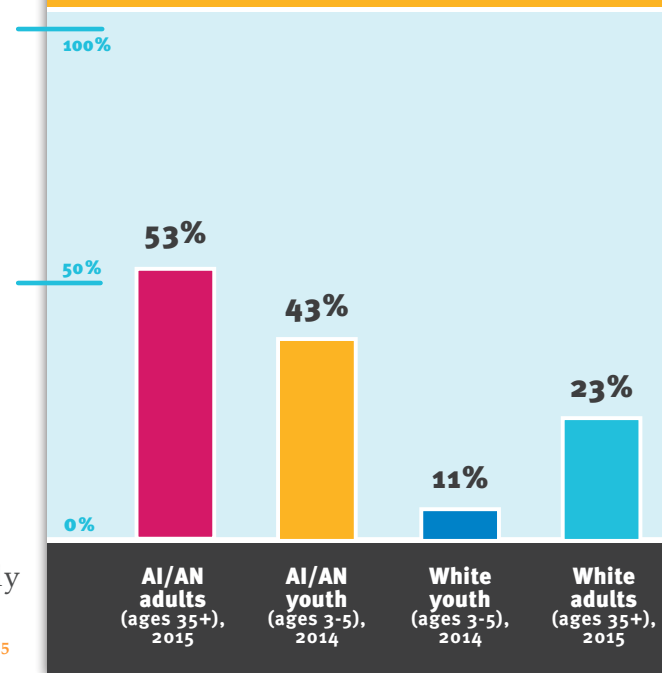
**The population without coverage or access:** Additionally, under one third (12,825) of this population were uninsured in 2016, under 10% (921) of whom also lacked access to IHS services.<sup>9</sup>

### 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)<sup>11</sup>



## Status on state's authority: Limits and opportunities

House Bill 1426 did not pass the North Dakota State Legislature in February 2019, and it cannot be reconsidered until 2021. The bill appears positively suited for tribes' use of dental therapists and would allow for Medicaid reimbursement. The bill continues to be raised in each legislative session, and continued support and citizen demand may help ensure its passage.<sup>10</sup>

### 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>

<sup>1</sup> 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](https://www.ihs.gov/doh/documents/IHS_Data_Brief_1-5_Year-Old.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 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](https://www.ihs.gov/DOH/documents/IHS_Data_Brief_March_2016_Oral_Health%20Survey_35_plus.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> 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>

<sup>4</sup> National Indian Health Board. (2019, Feb.). *Tribal Dental Therapy Legislation in North Dakota*. <https://www.nihb.org/docs/states/TOHI%20State%20Legislative%20Tracker%20Bill%20North%20Dakota.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> 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](https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/Files/HPIgraphic_1117_6.pdf?la=en)

<sup>6</sup> 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>

<sup>7</sup> Fox, Ed. (2018, Feb.). *Medicaid Enrollment 2010 to 2016 with and without IHS Access*. <https://public.tableau.com/profile/edward.fox#!/vizhome/AIANMedicaidEnrollment2010to2016withandwithoutIHSAccess/MedicaidEnrollmentwithandwithoutAccessstoIHS2010to2016>

<sup>8</sup> See Endnote 7

<sup>9</sup> 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>

<sup>10</sup> See Endnote 4

<sup>11</sup> See Endnote 2



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