

# Louisiana Dental Task Force for Adults with Developmental Disabilities

## POSITION STATEMENT

### on the Need for Comprehensive Dental Services for Adults with Developmental Disabilities in Louisiana

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The Louisiana Dental Task Force for Adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) was established by the State Advisory Committee for the Louisiana Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) to address the unmet dental health care needs of adults 18 years old and older with I/DD. The Task Force is composed of over 20 members including individuals with disabilities, family members, and various organizations and professionals advocating for and working with individuals with I/DD. The purpose of the Task Force is:

*To address the needs of adults (18 years and older) with I/DD who need anesthesia or IV sedation for a routine dental exam, cleaning, and x-rays because of aversions they have to probing in their mouth or inability to cooperate throughout the dental exam, cleaning, and x-ray process with the intent of preventing serious health issues while providing medical care cost savings for the State and developing recommended strategies to address these barriers.*

The Louisiana Dental Task Force has issued the following position statement on the need for Comprehensive Dental Services for Adults with Developmental Disabilities.

It is the position of the Louisiana Dental Task Force that Comprehensive Dental Services should be made available through Louisiana's Developmental Disabilities Waiver Programs as well as an allocation to Intermediate Care Facilities for Developmental Disabilities (ICF/DD) so that adults with I/DD can receive the dental health care services they need to prevent negative outcomes for both medical and behavioral health as well as economic hardship experienced by adults with I/DD and their families in Louisiana.

#### **Issues:**

- Adults with I/DD have gone too long without the necessary and needed dental health care leading to having fair to poor overall health and sometimes life-threatening health issues because of the lack of dental health care.
- Studies have shown that adults with developmental disabilities are at risk for multiple health problems including poor oral health and are four times more likely to report their health to be only fair or poorer than people without disabilities.
- Some adults with I/DD have aversions to probing in their mouths and need special accommodations to support their access to affordable dental health care.
- Adults with I/DD who have aversions experience extraordinary costs just for a routine dental exam and cleaning which at minimum includes an outpatient surgery center or hospital stay with anesthesia, diagnostic tests, labs, etc.
- Adults with I/DD have limited income because of their disability.
- Traditional Medicaid offers an Adult Denture Plan (ADP) for adults 21 y.o. and older that is limited to an exam, diagnostic radiograph, and preapproved dentures and/or partial and denture combination. Any necessary restorations or extractions are not covered. Dental cleanings and outpatient hospital stays requiring anesthesia are not covered. A set of dentures is limited to one set every 5 years for adults who are 18-20 yrs. old, and every 8 years for adults age 21 and older. However, individuals diagnosed with severe to profound I/DD typically do not tolerate the construction process nor are able to wear and maintain dentures. The Medicaid Managed Care Organization (MCO) plans are limited in services, providers, and restrictive in eligibility or cost prohibitive for individuals with behavioral challenges and complex medical issues.

- Limited Medicaid coverage for dental health care leads to extraordinary and unnecessary, overall medical costs for the individual with I/DD, their families, and the State.
- There is a severe lack of trained dentists to serve adults with I/DD who have aversions and sensory challenges as well as a lack of dental services available for adults who require anesthesia or IV sedation for a general exam, cleaning, or other necessary procedures needed for overall oral and physical health.
- Few hospitals or outpatient surgery centers are equipped with the necessary dental equipment to perform the dental services needed.
- There is a six month to five year wait for adults with I/DD who need dental services with anesthesia potentially causing further decline in overall health.

### **Principles:**

- Adults with I/DD have the right to a healthy life in order to be active and productive citizens in Louisiana and their community of choice.
- Access to affordable dental health care is a critical component to maintaining overall health and economic security.
- Adults with I/DD should be afforded preventive and restorative dental remedies so that they can retain their natural teeth, be free of infectious disease, be able to chew their food properly, and maintain proper nutrition.
- Adults with I/DD need clinicians who are properly trained in supporting and providing the dental health care and supports adults with I/DD need.
- Clinicians need access to hospitals and outpatient surgery centers with the appropriate equipment to serve adults with I/DD.

### **Priorities:**

1. Provide comprehensive dental health coverage through the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Waiver programs as well as an allocation to the Intermediate Care Facilities for Developmental Disabilities (ICF/DD) for adults with I/DD.
2. Develop enhanced and robust pre-doctoral dental education program as required by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) to train dental students on how to appropriately treat and work with adults with I/DD. The enhanced pre-doctoral dental education coursework should include:
  - A physician consultant experienced with complex health care needs, a behavioral psychology consultant with expertise in supporting individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities and co-occurring behavioral health needs, and a Parent/Family Perspective component.
  - Introduction of dental students to adults with I/DD through shadowing professionals who assist with caring for adults with I/DD to establish comfort with interacting with this population.
  - Training in Positive Behavior Intervention techniques in a behavioral component.
  - Addressing needs of adults who need anesthesia for a general exam due to aversions to probing in their mouths.
  - Addressing adults with complex health needs that may need hospitalization for dental procedures due to complex health issues.
  - Addressing adults with complex health needs (e.g., medically fragile, immune deficiencies, ventilator dependent) who cannot leave their home.
  - A clinical rotation of dental anesthesiology residents and hygienists.
3. Develop post-doctoral training for CEUs to build and expand on the capacity and competency of the existing dental workforce in public and private practice. Building capacity in the private practice is particularly important so adults with I/DD can establish a dental “home” and a long-term relationship with a dentist for their specialized dental care needs.
4. Make necessary dental equipment available in hospitals and outpatient surgery centers throughout the state so dentists have the equipment needed to serve adults with I/DD.

**Organizations in support of the above Position Statement:**

1. Louisiana Dental Task Force for Adults with Developmental Disabilities
2. [American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry](#)
3. [American Association for Community Dental Programs](#)
4. [Arc of Louisiana](#)
5. [Autism Society - Acadiana](#)
6. [Autism Society – Bayou](#)
7. [Autism Society – Greater Baton Rouge](#)
8. [Autism Society – Greater New Orleans](#)
9. [Autism Society – Louisiana](#)
10. [Bayou Land Families Helping Families](#)
11. [Community Provider Association](#)
12. [Crossroads Louisiana, Inc.](#)
13. [Disability Rights Louisiana](#)
14. [Evergreen Life Services](#)
15. [Families Helping Families of Greater New Orleans](#)
16. [Families Helping Families of Southwest Louisiana](#)
17. [Families Helping Families Region 7](#)
18. [Families USA](#)
19. [Louisiana Dental Association](#)
20. [Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council](#)
21. [Louisiana Governor’s Advisory Council for Disability Affairs](#)
22. [Louisiana Oral Health Coalition](#)
23. [Magnolia Community Services](#)
24. [National Coalition of Dentists for Health Equity \(NCDHE\)](#)
25. [Project Accessible Oral Health](#)
26. Quality Support Coordination
27. Region 9 Developmental Disabilities Regional Advisory Committee
28. [Special Needs and Parent Support Service of Louisiana, LLC](#)
29. [Special Olympics - Louisiana](#)
30. [United Cerebral Palsy of Greater New Orleans](#)
31. [VOR \(Voice of Reason\)](#)

## Citations

American Dental Association (October 2019). "Predoctoral programs now required to educate students on managing patients with disabilities," ADA News, Chicago, IL.

<https://www.ada.org/en/publications/ada-news/2019-archive/october/predoctoral-programs-now-required-to-educate-students-on-managing-patients-with-disabilities>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (November 2020). "Oral Health Conditions."

<https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/conditions/index.html>

DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement (July 16, 2020). "Barriers to Dental Access for Special Needs Patients: DentaQuest Partnership Continuing Education."

<https://www.dentaquestpartnership.org/system/files/DQP%20July%2016%20Webinar%20-%20Special%20Needs%20Dentistry.pdf>

Healthy Louisiana Dental Plan Comparison Chart (July, 2020).

[https://www.myplan.healthy.la.gov/sites/default/files/Documents/LAEB\\_DentalCompChart\\_2020\\_ENG\\_WEB\\_101420.pdf](https://www.myplan.healthy.la.gov/sites/default/files/Documents/LAEB_DentalCompChart_2020_ENG_WEB_101420.pdf)

Louisiana Task Force for Dental Services Adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (December 11, 2020). Formal Report to the Louisiana Department of Health and Other Relevant Agencies.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ONQPIfeyiJRC-uyonpba7VjlG4HetbhJ?usp=sharing>

National Council on Disability (2017, Fall). "Neglected for Too Long: Dental Care for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities." <https://ncd.gov/publications/2017/dental-issue-brief>