

# 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 Alaska

**36.4%**

of eligible people between 1 to 20 received preventative dental services.

Alaska is tied with Louisiana as the **5th** highest percent of adults with fair or poor oral condition.

**62.6%**

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

The percentage of adults aged 65+ who have lost all of their natural teeth due to tooth decay has **decreased** since 2012

**45.1%**

of children aged 6-9 at elevated risk for cavities received dental sealants.

There are **0** public dental schools and **0** private dental schools in the state of Alaska.

**42.1%**

of Alaska's population is served by community water systems that have fluoridated water. This is among the lowest 10 states in terms of fluoridation coverage.

### Medicaid

Anti-microbial treatments that stop decay from spreading are **NOT** covered.

Assessment of risk for tooth decay services are **NOT** covered.

## 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.

