



STATE OF DELAWARE  
**STATE COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

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**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: May 30, 2013

TO: All Members of the Delaware State Senate  
and House of Representatives

FROM: Ms. Daniese McMullin-Powell, Chairperson  
State Council for Persons with Disabilities

RE: S.B. 56 [Medicaid Coverage of Adult Dental Services]

The State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) has reviewed S.B. 56 which expands Delaware's Public Assistance Code to provide preventative and urgent dental care to all eligible Medicaid recipients. Payments for preventative or urgent dental care treatments shall be subject to a \$10.00 recipient copay and the total amount of dental care assistance provided to an eligible recipient shall not exceed \$1,000.00 per year, except that an additional \$1,500.00 may be authorized on an emergency basis for urgent dental care treatments through a review process established by the State Dental Director. SCPD endorses the proposed legislation and has the following observations.

Research on dental health suggests that poor oral health is linked to increased risks for chronic health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes. This problem is even more pronounced among individuals with disabilities because of their notoriously limited access to dental care. A survey conducted on the health status of individuals with disabilities in Delaware showed that almost a quarter (24.3%) of adults surveyed did not receive regular dental care. Adults who depend on state health insurance do not have dental care coverage through Medicaid.

While many of us have some anxiety, financial difficulty, or other challenge associated with our access to dental care, individuals with disabilities often face multiple difficulties. Recent studies have shown that one's knowledge of dental care is a major predictor of dental health. Patients with cognitive disabilities are often dependent on others for assistance, whether for transportation, home care activities, decision-making about treatment, and/or payment. Physical disabilities can limit a patient's ability to practice effective dental hygiene and access adequate care in a dental office. While Delaware offers a good Medicaid program to meet the needs of children who qualify, virtually no financial assistance is available for adults with unmet dental needs.

In summary, the lack of state funding for adults with disabilities is a major impediment to dental care, and poor dental health is known to be a factor in a wide range of non-dental medical conditions.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact SCPD if you have any questions regarding our position or observations on the proposed legislation.

cc: Mr. Brian Hartman, Esq.  
Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens  
Developmental Disabilities Council

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