

## Networks for Oral Health Integration Within the Maternal and Child Health Safety Net

# Arizona



## Environmental Scan Results 2022

### Executive Summary

This Environmental Scan seeks to understand the baseline facilitators and barriers to integrating oral health into primary care for pregnant people and children in community health centers. The information summarized here was compiled from key stakeholders (primary care and health professional associations) and state and federal agencies (HRSA, Medicaid, public health, etc.).

Following the 2020 Census, Arizona was the 14th most populated state in the nation. In 2014, Arizona expanded Medicaid eligibility rules, which has led to increased enrollment for the eligible population. Innovations in Arizona include training community health workers to conduct oral health screening and passing legislation to allow dental therapists to practice in certain public health settings.

There are 23 federally qualified health centers providing care to ~800,000 patients annually at 206 delivery sites around the state. Twenty eight percent (28%) of health center patients are children. As of 2020, 5.7% of children nationwide were uninsured, while 9% of Arizona children lacked health insurance. Nearly 21% of women of childbearing age were uninsured. Seventeen percent (17%) of Arizona health center patients were uninsured. Arizona ranks close to last -- #44 out of 51-- on access to and affordability of health care.

Health disparities correlate with income, race, and the distribution of human and physical resources. Arizona residents who are underserved face multiple barriers to oral disease prevention and treatment. These results specifically describe oral health services available to children and pregnant people in the community health center primary care setting.

### Fluoride Varnish Application

- Primary care providers can apply and be reimbursed for fluoride varnish by Medicaid every 3 months for children 6 months through the child's second birthday as part of an EPSDT visit.
- In federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), fluoride varnish application is reimbursed as part of the well-child visit. While Arizona Medicaid provides reimbursement for fluoride varnish application separately from the EPSDT well-child visit, FQHCs' prospective payment system does not allow fluoride varnish application to be billed separately from a well-child visit.

- Delegation of fluoride varnish application to registered or licensed practical nurses is permitted in the nursing practice act.
- Non-dental providers applying fluoride varnish are required to complete an oral health training course and submit proof of completion to Medicaid. They are not required to use specific risk assessment or educational tools.
- Non-dental providers should bill the CPT 99188 code for fluoride varnish application.

### Fluoride Varnish Billing

The following non-dental providers in Arizona can bill for fluoride varnish application:

- Physicians

## Dental Hygienist, Therapist & Assistant Scope of Practice

- Dental hygienists have a direct access option if they have had an active license for 3 years with a minimum of 500 hours in each of the last 2 years. Direct access, also called affiliated practice in Arizona, means dental hygienists that seek this certification can bill independently and can be paid by Medicaid directly.
- Dental therapists can practice only in specific locations (FQHCs, community health centers (CHCs), nonprofit dental practices, and private dental practices with patients referred by a CHC).
- Dental assistants can apply fluoride varnish but cannot perform a caries risk assessment.

## Teledentistry

- Before the COVID-19 pandemic, dental hygienists were using teledentistry (store and forward information to a dentist remotely), and Medicaid covered teledentistry for all EPSDT-eligible recipients.
- Since the pandemic, Medicaid has reimbursed for asynchronous and synchronous teledentistry for Medicaid recipients. Scope of service via teledentistry is limited to problem-focused exams and radiographs. Periodic and comprehensive oral evaluations cannot be conducted via teledentistry in Arizona.
- During the pandemic, dentists could bill synchronous teledentistry visits at parity with in-person visits.

## Community Water Fluoridation

- As of 2018, 58% of the population was on community water systems receiving fluoridated water, which is below the national average of 73%.

## Strengths

- Dental hygienists can supervise dental assistants and have a broad scope of practice.
- Dental hygienists in an affiliated practice agreement with a dentist who is a Medicaid provider may be reimbursed by Medicaid for services cited in the practice agreement.
- Dental therapists can complete an oral health risk assessment and apply fluoride varnish.
- Medicaid reimburses for three different visits (e.g., behavioral, dental, medical) in one day.

## Opportunities

- Expand Medicaid to include an adult dental benefit for “preventive and comprehensive” care. The only coverage currently available to adults is emergency care and is limited to \$1,000 per year.
- Expand Medicaid coverage to allow fluoride varnish every 3 months for children at high risk for caries beyond age 2 years, by non-dental providers
- Expand the settings in which direct access dental hygienists and dental therapists can practice and give them the ability to bill Medicaid directly.
- Provide a Medicaid dental benefit for adult pregnant and postpartum women. The only coverage currently available to adult pregnant women is for emergency care and is limited to \$1,000 per year.

## Resources

- [2020 Allowable and Prohibited Duties for Dental Assistants: Arizona](#)
- [32-1276-04. Dental Therapists; Clinical Practice; Supervising Dentists; Written Practice Collaborative Practice Agreements](#)
- [AHCCCS Fee-for-Service Schedules](#)
- [COVID-19 Emergency Dental Coding Guidance Teledentistry](#)
- [Finding the Keys to Arizona’s Oral Health Issues](#)
- [Dental Hygiene Scope of Practice](#)
- [Variation in Dental Hygiene Scope of Practice by State](#)
- [Smiles for Life: A National Oral Health Curriculum](#)

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## NOHI Project

To learn more about the NOHI project, please visit [www.mchoralhealth.org/pdfs/nohi-overview-profiles.pdf](http://www.mchoralhealth.org/pdfs/nohi-overview-profiles.pdf)

## Disclaimer

This environmental scan was conducted and summarized by AAP staff. This publication was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of cooperative agreement number UK7MC33230. This information or content and conclusions are those of AAP and RoMoNOH project staff and should not be construed as the official policy of HRSA, HHS, the U.S. government, AAP, or Denver Health, nor should any endorsements be inferred.

