

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

# Montana



## Environmental Scan Results 2020

### Executive Summary

In 2019, Montana was the second-least populated and second-least racially diverse state in the *Rocky Mountain Network of Oral Health (RoMoNOH)*. Montana is the 44<sup>th</sup> most populated state in the nation. In 2015, Montana expanded Medicaid eligibility rules, which has led to increased enrollment for the eligible population. This report focuses only on Medicaid reimbursement only and does not address private payers.

### Community Water Fluoridation

- In 2018, 30.7 percent of the population was on community water systems receiving fluoridated water, which is below the national average of 73 percent and by far the lowest percentage within RoMoNOH. Only three states (Oregon, New Jersey, and Hawaii) have lower percentages.

### Fluoride Varnish Application

- Fluoride varnish can be applied up to six times per year for children from birth through age 20 who are at high risk for dental caries.
- In federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), fluoride varnish application must be part of the well-child visit.
- Non-dental clinical providers who apply fluoride varnish are not required to complete an oral health training course.
- Non-dental clinical providers should bill the CPT code 99188 or D1206.
- Non-dental clinical providers who apply fluoride varnish are not required to use specific risk assessment or educational tools.

### Fluoride Varnish Billing

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

- Midwives (have prescriptive authority and thus can bill for oral health services, but midwives in Montana may not be providing any preventive oral health services)
- Nurse practitioners
- Nurses and medical assistants can apply fluoride varnish if physician delegates the task and codes directly
- Physicians
- Physician assistants

### Dental Hygienist and Dental Therapist Scope of Practice

- Dental hygienists have a direct access option if they have 2,400 clinical hours over the last 3 years or 3,000 career hours, with a minimum of 250 in the last 2 years. They must provide proof of liability insurance and the name of the practice where they will be working, complete all 12 continuing education credits, and submit an application. Direct access, also called limited access permit (LAP) in Montana, means dental hygienists that seek this certification can bill independently and can be paid by Medicaid directly.
- As of 2019, Montana passed a law stating that Indian Health Services can employ dental therapists as part of the Community Health Aide Program.

- Dental assistants can perform basic supportive dental procedures (including fluoride varnish application) and can be qualified in radiography.

## Teledentistry

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- Before COVID-19, Medicaid was covering synchronous teledentistry only. During COVID-19, Medicaid has been providing reimbursement for both asynchronous and synchronous teledentistry.

## Strengths

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- The AbCd program (Bright Smiles Montana) incentivizes dentists to provide care to children who are at high risk for dental caries.
- Children are defined as under age 20, which eliminates potentially confusing different age brackets.
- Recent legislation authorizes dental therapists to practice in the state but on tribal lands only.
- Recent legislation requires insurers to cover teledentistry services if those same services would be covered during an in-person visit.
- Medicaid allows three different visits (e.g., behavioral, dental, medical) to be billed on one day at one FQHC or other medical facility.

## Challenges

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- The low percentage of the population with access to community fluoridated water increases the likelihood that children will develop dental caries.
- The AbCd program (Bright Smiles Montana) covers children up to age 3 only.
- Direct access dental hygienist scope of practice remains limited.
- Direct access dental hygienists are restricted to certain settings (FQHCs, free clinics, and school-based programs).
- Although the income threshold for pregnant women to be eligible for Medicaid or have presumptive eligibility is higher than for the general population, there is no special dental coverage for pregnant women.

## Resources

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- [2019 Allowable Duties for Dental Assistants: Montana](#)
- [Bright Smiles Montana](#)
- [Dental: Dentist and Dental Hygienist](#)

- [Direct Access States](#)
- [For Medical Providers: Fluoride Application in Primary Care](#)
- [Scope of Practice](#)
- [Smiles for Life: A National Oral Health Curriculum](#)
- [Variation in Dental Hygiene Scope of Practice by State](#)

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## NOHI Project

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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)



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## Disclaimer

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