



## **WDA Supports Creation of Dental Medicaid Pilot Project** *Increasing Access to Dental Care for Children and Adults with Emergencies*

In 2008, the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) conducted a site visit of the state's Medicaid (MA) program because when compared to other states, **Wisconsin ranked among the lowest in level of access to dental care for children on MA**. The Wisconsin Dental Association continues to support the introduction of a three-county pilot project to increase funding for dental services provided to MA children and adults in need of urgent dental care. **A dental MA pilot project would provide a small-scale test of the extent to which market-rate MA reimbursement would impact MA, BadgerCare and BadgerCare Plus recipients' ability to access dental services.**

**The dental MA pilot proposal that was introduced in the 2007-08 legislative session (but failed to pass) included market-based rates for MA adult emergencies and children's dental services for individuals residing in Brown, Racine and La Crosse counties.** The fiscal estimate for this proposal when introduced last session was \$1.6 million in state funds (GPR) each year (\$3.2 million GPR over a two-year budget cycle). We understand this proposal would impact only a few of the state's 72 counties, but we also recognize its value in providing policymakers and the dental community with data to determine whether payment of market-based rates is an appropriate public policy for improving access to dental care in Wisconsin. The WDA believes this data will duplicate data already collected in other states which shows access to dental care substantially increases with market-rate reimbursement.

Data from the state's fee-for-service MA program shows that as of Fiscal Year 2006, **\$74 million in dental care was provided to MA recipients but the program (state and federal governments) only paid \$32 million (or 44 percent) of those charges.** This means dentists donated \$42 million into the program as a result of their participation. **The amount the dental profession contributed is greater than the amount contributed by the state and federal governments combined.** The WDA believes this data demonstrates that dentists are more than willing partners in the current program, but we continue to believe MA patients should not have to depend on the charity services of dentists to obtain the care the state has promised them. **If the pilot project fails, the state will have the data it needs to move forward with other potential solutions to the access problem.**

**The WDA will continue to advocate for passage of this and similar proposals. We appreciate the support of state legislators who would like to have the state test this market-based reimbursement rate theory.** If you are interested in supporting a dental MA pilot proposal or if you have any other questions, please contact Mara Brooks in the WDA Legislative Office at 608-250-3442.

### *MISSION STATEMENT*

*The Wisconsin Dental Association advances the interests of its members and the dental profession by promoting professional excellence and quality oral health care for the public.*

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