



Statewide Universal Healthcare That Includes Dental Coverage

Overview and Background Facts:

By law, the Illinois Health Care Justice Act Taskforce will issue a report in late 2006 asking the Illinois legislature to adopt a health care plan that would provide health care services to all residents of the State of Illinois by July 1, 2007. The plan is to provide access to a full range of preventive, acute and long-term health care services. The taskforce will determine which core benefits will be provided under its recommended plan(s).

The Illinois General Assembly recognizes that the U.S. census report indicates on any given day that an estimated 1,800,000 Illinoisans are without health insurance.

ADA recommends that, in any health system proposal, preventive services be provided for the indigent children and subsidized, on a sliding fee scale based on family income, for children of the working poor. In addition, the position states that publicly-funded plans should also include the restoration of carious teeth. (1993:664; 1994:656)

Comments:

Certain barriers exist in the current Illinois health care system making it difficult for many Illinois citizens to access dental care. Chronically low reimbursement in the Illinois Medicaid program has discouraged many dentists from participating in the program.

Little is offered by the State of Illinois to attract dentists into those areas that have been deemed "underserved." No universal plan can address the distribution of dentists that choose to practice in Illinois.

Efficient use of all dental team members, under the direction of a dentist, can help in guiding all Illinois residents to a level of good oral health.

ISDS Position Statement:

Any statewide universal health care plan must be an adequately funded system that uses a variety of mechanisms to allow all residents to obtain a primary level of dental care.

A primary level of dental care is defined as the evaluation (including examination), diagnosis, management and overall coordination and/or delivery of services by a dentist to meet the patient's oral health needs for the prevention and treatment of oral disease and injury and the restoration and maintenance of health. (ADA Primary Dental Care 1994:668)