

Report: Illinois ranks 18th nationally for oral health

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Illinois continues to rank among the middle of the pack nationally for its efforts to expand and improve oral healthcare for older adults, according to a recent report titled, "A State of Decay," produced by the nonprofit Oral Health America. The report compared data from 2016 to 2018 and looked at measures like severe tooth loss and community water fluoridation. Illinois received an overall score of 58%, or "good." It ranked No. 18 in the nation. The report's key findings included:

- 37.4% of Illinoisans 65 and older have severe tooth loss, compared to the national average of 36.7%.
- 63.9% have had a recent dental visit, compared to the national average of 66.7%.
- The state covers seven of the 13 Medicaid services analyzed, compared to the national average of 7.75.
- 98.5% of the population receives community water fluoridation, compared to the national average of 72.6%.
- The state's 2017 oral health plan mentions older adults but doesn't include specific, measurable and realistic objectives.
- The state completed a local pilot screening survey for older adults in 2012 or earlier.

The report also laid out a number of policy recommendations like establishing an extensive adult Medicaid dental benefit, integrating comprehensive dental coverage in Medicare, expanding community water fluoridation, including specific objectives for older adults in all state oral health plans and conducting screening surveys for older adults.