



# Association of Critical Access Dental Providers of Minnesota

**The Voice of Oral Health for Publicly Insured Minnesotans**

In 2001 the Minnesota Legislature directed the Department of Human Services (DHS) to designate “critical access dental providers” serving Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP or Medicaid/Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare) enrollees. The goal has been to stabilize access to care for publicly insured Minnesotans. DHS identifies dental offices and clinics throughout the state that serve as essential resources of dental care for this population. These critical access dental providers (CAD Providers) include private dental offices in rural and urban areas of the state, as well as non-profit clinics and county hospital clinics.

This extremely vital network has strengthened Minnesota’s dental safety net. CAD Providers now deliver between two thirds to three quarters of dental services to MHCP patients. This public value investment has provided multiple public benefits in **improved access, cost containment, and improved quality**.

- **Improve Access:** CAD providers prioritize areas with limited oral care options, serving people enrolled in public programs, rural areas, and low-income urban neighborhoods
- **Contain Cost:** By prioritizing essential services, preventative care, and care coordination for patients with the greatest need, CAD Providers help prevent costly complications from untreated dental issues and improve the overall health of people with diabetes, heart disease and other common chronic conditions.
- **Improve Quality:** CAD Providers integrate dental care into whole-person health by serving high-need populations with specialized training and community presence. They partner with county-based and managed care plans, offering expertise in cultural competency and addressing social determinants of health. They help coordinate essential support services, including translation, transportation, and accessibility services, to meet the unique needs of underserved communities.

CAD Providers are a small subset of all of Minnesota’s dental providers. Yet they provide the lion’s share of dental care to MHCP patients. CAD Providers have come together to advocate for their needs under various coalitions (for example: the Safety Net Coalition, the Oral Health Alliance, Get To Yes, and others).

In 2024, for the first time, **the Association of Critical Access Dental Providers of Minnesota (CAD-Minnesota)** was established as a **501(c)(6) non-profit**. CAD-Minnesota members and allied organizations work together to align policy to payment that will improve access and quality while containing costs. Our shared goal is optimal oral health for our State, especially Minnesotans on public insurance. Learn more at this [link](#).