Oral Health in California: What About Older Adults?

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• All on mute. Use Questions function for substantive questions and for technical concerns.

• Problems with getting on to the webinar? Send an e-mail to acutler@justiceinaging.org

• Slides and a recording are available at justiceinaging.org/resources-for-advocates/webinars/

• See also the chat box for this web address.
Justice in Aging is a national organization that uses the power of law to fight senior poverty by securing access to affordable health care, economic security, and the courts for older adults with limited resources.

Since 1972 we’ve focused our efforts primarily on populations that have traditionally lacked legal protection such as women, people of color, LGBT individuals, and people with limited English proficiency.
Today’s Discussion

• State of Oral Health
• Denti-Cal
• Unique Oral Health Needs of Older Adults
• Recommendations
• Questions/Discussion
State of Oral Health for Older Adults
The Oral Health Lifespan
Children and Tooth Decay Disparities Arise Early

Healthy People 2010
The Oral Health Lifespan
Adults 20-64
Loss of Permanent Teeth

Dental Caries and Tooth Loss in Adults in the US, 2011-2012
The Oral Health Lifespan
Adults 65 and Over
Complete Tooth Loss (Edentulism)

Dental Caries and Tooth Loss in Adults in the US, 2011-2012
The Oral Health Lifespan
Adults 65 and Over
Dental Visit Last Twelve Months

Treatment Needs in Seniors (Age 65 and Over)
California’s Low-Income Older Adults

- 38% in SNFs have no natural teeth
- 17% have no upper or bottom dentures
- 42% have untreated decay

Source: Center for Oral Health, preliminary survey results
California’s Denti-Cal Program
Well-Documented Problems

• Carve Out
• Exceedingly low reimbursement rates
• Administrative Burdens
• Coverage is not evidence-based
Unique Oral Health Needs of Older Adults
Oral Health Needs Neglected

- California ranked 30th in country
- No State Oral Health Plan
- No older adult basic screening survey
Aging and Oral Health

- Teeth wear and tear
- Gums recede
- Dry mouth
- Physical, mental, sensory impairments impede routine hygiene
Poor Oral Health Affects Overall Health

- Poor oral health → Affects eating
- Eating impacts nutrition
- Nutrition impacts weight loss; chronic conditions
- Chronic conditions worsen infections
- Infections worsen chronic conditions
Shortage of Providers to Treat Older Adults

- Overall shortage
- Dental schools offer little clinical training for treating older adults
Coverage Not Comprehensive and is Confusing

• Medicare – covers little

• Medi-Cal – not comprehensive

• Medicare MA plans – may offer supplemental coverage

• The CARVE OUT
Dental Services are not Co-located with Health Services

- Frequent doctor visits
- More difficult to travel
- Lack of co-located services
Recommendations
Recommendations

- Adopt recommendations in Little Hoover Commission Report and recent legislation
- Include advocates for older adults in policy discussions
- Expand Denti-Cal coverage (and Medicare)
Recommendations

• Include older adults in state plan
• Conduct a basic needs survey of older adults
• Incentives for treatment of older adults/more providers
• Make co-located services a priority
Resources

• Justice in Aging: justiceinaging.org

• Center for Oral Health: centerfororalhealth.org

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