



Virginia Board for  
People with Disabilities

Assessment of

# ACCESSIBILITY OF DENTAL CARE

for Virginians with  
Developmental Disabilities

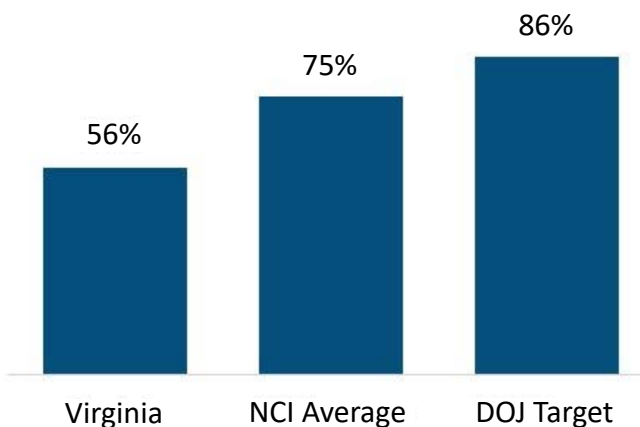
**D**ental care access among Virginians with developmental disabilities (DD) substantially lags other states and Virginia's goal. Only 56% of Virginians with DD Waivers had a dental exam in the past year, according to the 2021-22 National Core Indicators (NCI). This rate ranked last among 27 states that participated in the NCI data collection effort. This rate was also far below the 86% needed to meet a compliance indicator in Virginia's settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice.

People with DD have difficulty getting dental care because many dental professionals are not able or willing to treat them. One reason dental professionals are not able or willing to treat them is that they have not been educated enough about this population.

Another reason is that they aren't compensated enough for the extra time, other accommodations, and sedation and anesthesia that people with DD often need. It is important for health insurers to mitigate these financial impacts to improve access to dental care.

The Commonwealth needs to make serious changes to comply with the U.S. Department of Justice settlement agreement and be more in line with other states. Several initiatives are underway to improve oral health for people with DD, which are commendable, but additional support from state policymakers is needed.

*Percentage of People with DD Waivers Who Had Annual Dental Exam (2021-22 NCI Data)*



*The report offers 18 recommendations to improve oral health for people with DD, including but not limited to the following:*

### Invest in initiatives that increase exposure of dental students to people with DD



- Virginia General Assembly fund a clinic at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry that is dedicated to treating people with special health care needs
- Virginia General Assembly fund a Fellowship program at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry that addresses oral health disparities affecting people with DD

### Increase continuing education on oral health for people with DD



- Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS), Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), and other stakeholders expand continuing education offerings for dental professionals on people with DD
- Virginia General Assembly amend Code of Virginia §54.1-2709 to allow dental professionals to receive up to two continuing education credit hours for providing uncompensated care to people with disabilities
- Virginia General Assembly amend Code of Virginia §54.1-2709 and §54.1-2722 to require that a portion of the 15 annual continuing education credit hours for licensed dental professionals pertain to underserved populations, including but not limited to people with DD

### Invest in a sustainable dental service system for people with DD



- DMAS seek approval from the Virginia General Assembly to increase reimbursement for certified translation or sign language services & sedation and anesthesia in the dental office
- Virginia General Assembly increase funding for the DBHDS Dental Program so they can expand their capacity to meet demand

### Assess how well the Medicaid dental benefit meets the needs of people with DD



- DMAS review the adequacy of individual reimbursement rates that are key to serving people with DD and report publicly on its findings every three years
- DMAS biennially assess network adequacy for people on the DD Waiver

### Conduct outreach to Medicaid members with DD



- DMAS regularly collect feedback from providers and members on disability-specific issues & solicit input from disability stakeholders on Request for Proposals and contracts for the agency's dental benefits administrator

### Study additional opportunities for improvement



- Joint Commission on Health Care study innovative ways to address barriers to accessing sedation and anesthesia for dental procedures & minimize the need for sedation and anesthesia