

## **Talking Points: Dentally Uninsured Adults**

The Virginia Oral Health Coalition is dedicated to ensuring all Virginians can access affordable, comprehensive health care that includes oral health. You can help shape policies and programs that impact access to dental care by contacting your legislators. Please consider calling or emailing your representatives to let them know how important it is to you that accessible, affordable health care coverage be expanded – and that it should include oral health.

### **Find Your Representatives**

[U.S. Congressional Representatives from Virginia](#)  
[Virginia General Assembly Representatives](#)

### **Main Points to Emphasize**

*Lack of dental insurance is a health and economic issue.*

- According to the Virginia Oral Health Report Card, 38% of Virginians do not have dental coverage<sup>1</sup>
- Virginia Medicaid does not cover preventive services for non-pregnant adults; only emergent dental care.
- The average cost of a Medicaid recipient's dental care in an emergency room is nearly ten times more expensive than preventive care from a dentist.<sup>2</sup>
- Studies have shown that uninsured individuals visit the emergency department for a dental issue more than any other diagnoses.<sup>3</sup>
- Research found that, on discharge, 81% of patients who receive care in the emergency department for dental issues received scripts for opiates and 69% received scripts for antibiotics.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Virginia Department of Health. Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> "A comparison of Medicaid Reimbursement for non-definitive pediatric dental treatment in the emergency room versus periodic preventative care." 2000. 463-468. E. Pettinado, M. Webb, S.N. Seale. *Pediatric Dentistry*.

<sup>3</sup> "A Costly Dental Destination: Hospital Care Means States Pay Dearly." February 2012. The Pew Center on the States, Pew Children's Dental Care Campaign Issue Brief. Retrieved from [http://www.pewstates.org/uploadedFiles/PCS\\_Assets/2012/A%20Costly%20Dental%20Destination\(1\).pdf](http://www.pewstates.org/uploadedFiles/PCS_Assets/2012/A%20Costly%20Dental%20Destination(1).pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Benjaminc C. Sun et al. Emergency Department Visits for Non-traumatic Dental Problems: A Mixed-Method Study. *Am J. Public. Health*. May 2015.