

# National Rural Health Association

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## The National Rural Oral Health Initiative

The National Rural Oral Health Initiative, a collaboration between the National Rural Health Association and the CareQuest Institute, aims to address oral health disparities in rural America. Proudly entering Year 6 of the initiative.

The collaborative efforts prioritize Policy, Communications, Education, and Research to raise awareness and prioritize person-centered care. This initiative aims to improve access to quality oral health care in rural communities and connect groups with necessary resources for patient assistance.

## Status of Oral Care in Washington

**64.4%**  
of the Washington population is served by community water systems that have fluoridated water.

This ranks Washington **33th out of 50** states for community water fluoridation, giving it the 18th lowest rate in the nation

There are 1 public and 1 private dental schools in the state of Washington

The State of Washington DOES NOT mandate water fluoridation.

**69.3%**  
of adults ages 18+ have visited a dentist or dental clinic in 2025.

**Medicaid**  
**38.0%**  
of children in Washington are covered by Medicaid/CHIP

**95.1%**  
of all eligible children participate in Medicaid/CHIP.

**38.9%**  
of the Washington population is covered by Medicaid/CHIP.

All preventive dental services including cleanings, fluoride treatments, sealants, and space maintainers are covered for children under Medicaid. Dental exams are covered, and risk assessments are included as part of the exam, while oral health screenings are not covered.

## NRHA Rural Oral Policy Objectives

- NRHA supports targeted federal and state action to expand fluoride access and SDF utilization, invest in comprehensive dental coverage for rural veterans, prioritization of preventative care services, and strengthen rural oral health research capacity to inform effective policy solutions.
- NRHA supports federal efforts to expand the allied-health professional network and dental workforce through community-based organizations, federally recognize mid-level providers, and improve loan deferment and repayment programs. Rural health care workforce shortages can be enhanced through additional investments in rural oral health training programs.
- NRHA encourages expansion of Medicare and Medicaid programs to include oral health coverage. Investing in a strong rural health safety net bolsters economies and ensures comprehensive coverage.
- NRHA encourages data transparency within Medicare Advantage plans and the enhancement of oral health care delivery in rural areas using remote technology.

