



**Public Health
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NEWS RELEASE

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Public Health Working to Improve Dental Care Access in Wright County

Minnesota ranks at the bottom (47 out of 50) in the nation for Medicaid dental care reimbursement rates. Access to dental care is a real health disparity affecting tens of thousands of Wright County residents. Approximately 10% of Wright County's population receives health insurance through a Minnesota Health Care Program that does not adequately fund dental care.

Minnesota's Medicaid reimbursement rate covers only 31% of what dental providers charge. Most Wright County dental providers do not currently accept new Medicaid patients, citing inadequate compensation for services as their reason. In 2017, as little as 36% of Minnesota children enrolled in Medicaid received dental services.

Since November 2016, Wright County Public Health has partnered with Wright County Area United Way and contracted Children's Dental Services to provide dental care to one of our most vulnerable populations.

Children's Dental Services serves children and young adults aged 0-26. They also see pregnant women of any age. Most routine dental care can be provided at these appointments including cleanings, sealants, fillings, crowns, and extractions. They accept all forms of insurance and offer sliding scale payment options.

Tooth decay is one of the most common preventable diseases in this country. Gum disease in pregnant women has been linked to premature and low birth-weight babies. Systemic diseases such as leukemia, diabetes, and heart and kidney diseases have oral symptoms including swollen gums, mouth ulcers, dry mouth, and gum problems. According to the CDC, chronic disease such as diabetes and cancers often correlate with oral disease.

Poor dental care also affects a person's self-confidence. It can influence a person's social interactions and job prospects leading to social isolation and deepening the financial load on society.

Between 2015 and 2018, Wright County hospitals saw almost 2000 patients in the emergency room for dental related illness. An average dental emergency room visit costs \$750 in the United States.

Wright County Public Health Task Force has taken on this health disparity with greater effort. Plans are currently being created to attract permanent universal dental care to our county.

Community Dental Care, a not-for-profit organization, has expressed interest in opening a location in Wright County. Their vision, "is that all people will have access to high quality, affordable dental care to improve their overall health in a convenient, caring, and respectful environment."

Advancing health equity in Wright County through efforts made by various organizations has improved the lives of so many of our residents. Wright County Area United Way is funded through generous donations of community members. If you'd like more information regarding Children's Dental Services, call 612-746-1530.



Anna Louks receives a dental exam by Children's Dental Service's staff, Christy Fogarty, DA, and Wang Vang, ADT, at Wright County's Health and Human Services building.