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Political Mirror blog

Dentists cheer plans to limit, not eliminate, Medicaid coverage

By [Arielle Levin Becker](#) Mar 02, 2011 11:49am

The governor's budget includes a cut in the dental services adults with Medicaid could receive. But to the Connecticut State Dental Association, which fought against proposals in recent years that would have eliminated the services entirely, it's still a victory of sorts.

"Given the budget circumstances and the financial times that we find ourselves in, the fact that it was able to be maintained is great," Dr. Jonathan Knapp, co-chairman of the dental association's council on legislation, said Wednesday.

Under Gov. [Dannel P. Malloy](#)'s budget proposal, dental benefits for adults in Medicaid would be scaled back, including covering only one annual periodic exam, cleaning and bitewing X-ray for health adults. The changes are projected to save \$20.1 million over two years.

Many adults in Medicaid struggle to find dentists to treat them because the rates paid are so low. When the state's fiscal situation improves, Knapp said, the dental association would like to see the Medicaid coverage restored and enhanced. But for now, he said, "we're happy that it's actually still in there because there was certainly a risk of it going away."

Knapp spoke as part of "Dental Day at the State Capitol." The association's other plans for the legislative session include supporting funding for school-based health and dental programs and advocating for changes to prohibit insurance companies from setting fees for services they do not cover.

The group is also seeking \$85,000 in state money to fund a local administrator for a program that provides donated dental services to needy people who are disabled, elderly and medically compromised. The program already exists in the state, with coordination done by an administrator in Colorado, but the dental association hopes to expand its reach in Connecticut and said it could provide \$225,000 in free care to 100 people in the first year with a local administrator, with more patients served after that.