

# The 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 North Carolina

**87.9%**  
of the North Carolina population is served by community water systems that have fluoridated water.

This ranks North Carolina **17th out of 50** states in fluoridated water in America.

There are 2 public and 1 private dental school in the state of North Carolina.

The State of North Carolina does **NOT** mandate fluoridation.

**65.5%**  
of adults ages 18+ have visited a dentist or dental clinic in 2020.

**Medicaid**  
**41.0%**  
of children in North Carolina are covered by Medicaid/CHIP

**93.1%**  
of all eligible children participate in Medicaid/CHIP.

**19%**  
of the North Carolina population is covered by Medicaid/CHIP.

All Preventative Services (Cleanings, Fluoride Treatments, Sealants, and Space maintainers) are covered under Medicaid for Children.

## NRHA Rural Oral Policy Objectives

- Address rural declining life expectancy by advocating for increased access to fluoridated water in rural homes and support comprehensive dental programs for veterans. NRHA also calls for policies to improve affordable dental care, eliminate discrimination, and emphasize funding for rural oral health research.
- Reduce rural healthcare workforce shortages through legislation to improve childcare, increased funding for rural development, and housing assistance. Advocate for "Grow your own" programs, and increased funding for the National Health Service Corps.
- Advocate expanding Medicare coverage to include dental services related to conditions like diabetes or cardiovascular disease. Support comprehensive Medicaid dental coverage for all adults, including measures to increase federal matching percentages and promote innovative care delivery systems such as mobile dental units and virtual dental homes, to enhance access to preventative oral care in rural areas.

