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## Legislature approves restoring Adult Denti-Cal

The move to restore Adult Denti-Cal benefits is one step closer to reality after the Legislature voted on a new state budget plan. The proposed budget, which still needs the governor's signature, provides funding for the restoration of Adult Denti-Cal benefits slated to begin in May 2014, with a proposed annual cost of \$77 million. The coverage includes preventive care, restorations and full dentures.

Lawmakers cited the [CDA Foundation's CDA Cares free dental clinics](#) as a stark example of the tremendous need.

"I will never forget the sea of people – the endless lines of low-income Californians – some of whom had waited overnight," said Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento), who made the restoration of Adult Denti-Cal a top priority after his visit last August to CDA Cares in Sacramento. "It wasn't just to get their teeth cleaned or fill a cavity, but for surgery to deal with abscessed teeth, root canals and replacement of missing teeth. I saw people who had lost all their teeth because they can't get preventive dental care."

"This is a significant achievement in the effort to restore essential dental services for low-income adults and a step in the right direction to address the oral health care crisis facing millions of Californians," said CDA President Lindsey Robinson, DDS. "We appreciate the support of the Legislature and the leadership of Senator Darrell Steinberg, Assembly Speaker John Perez and Governor Jerry Brown in recognizing the need to restore dental services for low-income Californians who experience barriers to oral health care."

Steinberg said he was stunned by what he saw at CDA Cares and decided to make it his mission to restore Adult Denti-Cal in the next fiscal year. In addition to preventive care and restorations, Steinberg felt it was important to include full dentures in the coverage to help the employment prospects of edentulous Californians.

"In dental care, there are issues of both health and economics," said Steinberg. "By restoring adult dental care benefits to include full dentures, we can restore health as well as the confidence people need to get back into the workforce and to go out and apply for a job with pride."

Prior to the Legislature's approval, the effort to restore Adult Denti-Cal received a unanimous vote of confidence by the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, which voted 14-0 on May 24 to fully restore Adult Denti-Cal benefits.

Sen. Bill Emmerson, DDS, (R-Redlands), served as the vice chair of the committee and supported efforts to restore Adult Denti-Cal.

"I think that there is a way to fund this without putting a hole in the budget," said Emmerson during the hearing.

Sen. Bill Monning (D-Carmel), who had visited CDA Cares San Jose in May, cited the event as direct evidence of the extent of the oral health care access crisis in California. "There were thousands of people who turned out for basic dental care, extractions and dentures. And thanks to the volunteerism of the dental community and the broader community, people received services," Monning said.

Monning also commented on the fact that not restoring Adult Denti-Cal services would not save the state money in the long-term because patients end up in emergency rooms for dental care.

Since 2009, after the elimination of virtually all Adult Denti-Cal services for 3 million people, an increasing number of people have sought emergency dental care at hospitals, which have no dentists and can only provide antibiotics and medications for pain at a cost much higher than preventive care.

“The time is right to restore, fully, the Medi-Cal adult benefit,” Monning said. “We know anecdotally in our communities, not having access to adult Medi-Cal dental services doesn’t result in people not seeking treatment, they just end up seeking it in emergency rooms once they have an abscess and we end up paying way more than if we had in place good, preventive help in prevention and services.”

- See more at:

<http://www.cda.org/newsevents/details/tabid/146/articleid/1296/legislature#sthash.LpKYA22Q.dpuf>