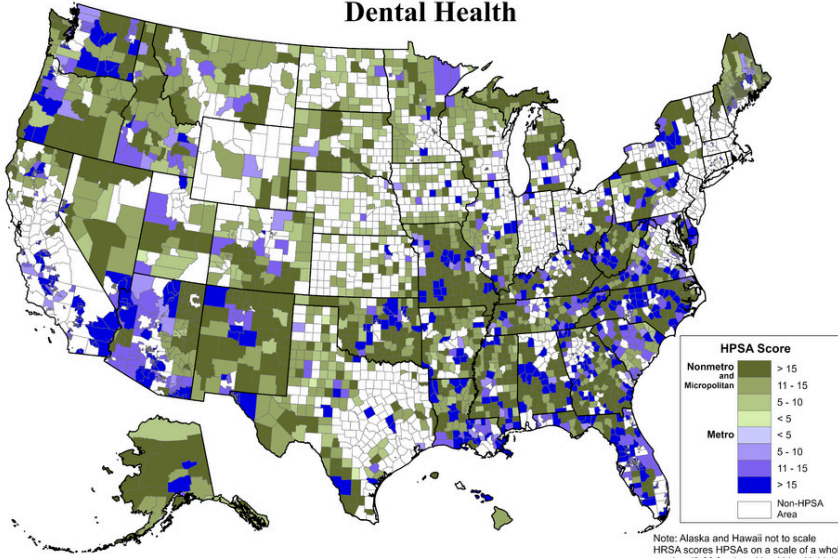


# Rural Oral Health

Health Professional Shortage Areas  
Dental Health



Note: Alaska and Hawaii not to scale  
HPSA scores HPSAs on a scale of a whole number (0-25 for dental health), with higher scores indicating greater need

Sources: data.HRSA.gov, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, January 2024



**67% of rural areas are considered Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas**

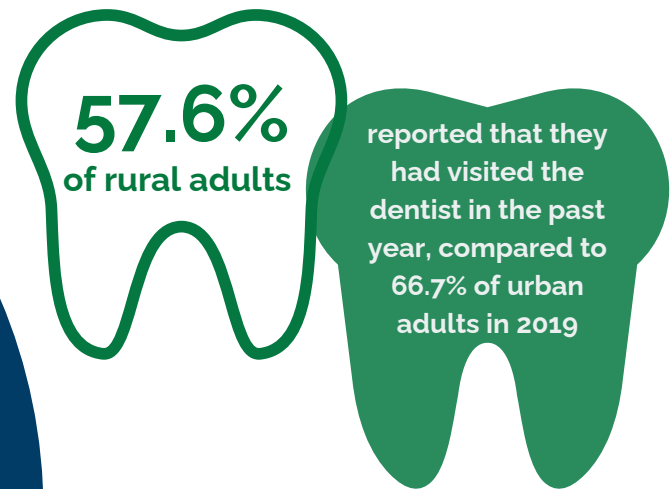
## Barriers to Rural Oral Health Care

- Geographic isolation
- Lack of adequate transportation
- Higher rates of poverty
- Availability of providers willing to treat Medicaid patients
- Lack of dental insurance
- Acute provider shortages

**34% of individuals living in a rural environment rate their oral health as fair or poor, compared with 27% of urban residents.**

## Oral Health Advocacy Agenda

- Comprehensive Medicare and Medicaid adult benefit
- “Grow your own” and pipeline workforce programs
- Recruiting and retaining oral health workforce
- Access to fluoridation
- Rural oral health data availability
- Addressing veterans oral health
- Innovative rural health delivery systems



**Rural children are known to have poorer dental health and are less likely to receive preventive dental care than urban children.**

# NRHA Supported Legislation

## Dental Loan Repayment Assistance Act

(S.403/H.R.994 in 118th Congress)

*Sens. Lujan (D-NM) & Collins (R-ME); Reps. Cardenas (D-CA) & Bilirakis (R-FL)*

Requires HHS to conduct a public education campaign to increase oral health literacy and awareness.

## Medicaid Dental Benefit Act

(S. 570/H.R. 1342 in 118th Congress)

*Sens. Cardin (D-MD) & Stabenow (D-MI); Reps. Barragan (D-CA), Doggett (D-TX) & Grijalva (D-AZ)*

Requires Medicaid programs to cover dental and oral health services for all adults and increase the federal matching percentage for such services.

## Expanding Childcare in Rural America Act

(S. 1867/H.R. 3922 in 118th Congress)

*Sens. Brown (D-OH) & Marshall (R-KS); Reps. Gluesenkamp Perez (D-TX), Mann (R-KS)*

Improves the availability and quality of childcare in rural communities to help recruit dental professionals.

## Medicare Dental Benefit Act of 2023

(S. 2012/H.R. 4146 in 118th Congress)

*Sens. Cardin (D-MD), Blumenthal (D-CT), Markey (D-MA), Merkley (D-OR), & Brown (D-OH);  
Reps. Barragan (D-CA) & Kelly (D-IL)*

Includes of dental care under Medicare coverage.

## The Improving Whole Health for Veterans with Chronic Conditions Act

(S. 1954/H.R. 4150 in 118th Congress)

*Sens. Sanders (I-VT) and Reps. Brownley (D-CA)*

Creates a pilot program for comprehensive dental coverage for veterans.

## Dental Care for Veterans Act

(H.R. 2413 in 118th Congress)

*Reps. Brownley (D-CA)*

Allows all veterans enrolled in the VA health care system to be eligible for VA-provided dental services.