

Medi-Cal Dental Advisory Committee Meeting



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 2, 2025 – 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Sacramento County Public Health Education Program

Zoom Meeting ID: 161 863 4667

7001-A East Parkway– Conference Room 1
Sacramento CA 95823

Facilitator: Jonathan Porteus, Chair

Scribe: Jennifer Fitzpatrick

Members Present:

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| • Jonathan Porteus | • Darrell Kenworthy | • Denise Canacari |
| • Julie Gallelo | • Michelle Monroe | • Timothy Martinez |
| • Robyn Alongi | • James Musser | • Shannon McConnell |
| • Olivia Kasirye | • Sunanda | • Debra Payne |
| • Caroll Badgley | • Bandyopadhyay | • David Hughes |
| • Monica Montano | • Morgan Musser | |
| • Robin Blanks-Guster | • Cynthia Stuart | |

Members Absent:

- Bilee Hernandez
- Cherag Sarkari

Members Called in:

- Mary Jess Wilson
- Judy Lema

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Public Present in person or teleconference:

Alisha Gutierrez, Amber Kwiecien, Annalisa Howland, Bakir Abduljabbar, Cyndi Smith, Cynthia Yamasaki, David Ferber, Lisa Nguyen, Edith Acevedo, Helen Pham, Karen Jacoby, Kelsey Peterson, Laurie Curfman, Melody Law, May Saeturn, Navish Reddy, Paul Glassman, Paula Lee, Rhiannon Jordan, Rhoda Gonzales, Rosanna Jackson, Shawn Massey, Stephanie Casey, STumber, Susan McLearn, Yanique Guy, Cynthia Johnston, David Goodman, Debbie Blanchard, Dorothy Seleski, Destiny Rockwood, Felicia Scott, Joseph Canas, Katrina Eagilen, Kim Benton, Kimberly Arredondo-Blanco, Jennifer Fitzpatrick, Laila Zaib, Laura Valle, Margaret Delmore, Matthew Mouille, Michael Tavallaci, R. Newman, Rajvir Bhogal, Rima Hakim, Santosh Sundaresam, Sonia Dhillon, Tiffany Turner.

2:00	Welcome and Introductions	Meeting called to order by Jonathan Portheus.
2:07	Approve Meeting Minutes (Action)	August 7, 2025, minutes reviewed by the Committee. Motion to approve: Debra Payne Second: James Musser Motion Carried.
2:10	DHCS Update	Medi-Cal Dental: Budget and Legislation Impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maisey Turn reported that DHCS has prepared two letters regarding upcoming U.S. population changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 3, 2025: Explains reinstatement of asset limits. November 7, 2025: Covers Medi-Cal expansion freeze and elimination of dental benefits for U.S. population adults aged 19 and older. Implementation of these changes will begin July 1, 2026. DHCS will provide informational materials for members and providers ahead of this date. Proposition 56 remains scheduled to sunset on July 1, 2026. DHCS is preparing for the transition with provider bulletins and related publications. Questions & Discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members confirmed Prop 56 is set to end July 1, 2026; no changes have occurred at this time. It was noted that MCDAC will have an opportunity to comment once the Governor's proposed budget is released in January. Dental Managed Care Transition Monitoring Report

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• David Ferber branch chief from DHCS Medi-Cal Dental Division reported that following the July 1, 2025, implementation of new dental managed care contracts, DHCS has maintained regular communication with all three managed care plans.• The California Dental Network (DentaQuest) has had more frequent collaboration due to being a newer plan.• Collaboration topics include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Policy interpretation○ Data sharing○ Member notices• Transition monitoring reports, which were initially submitted daily, are now on a biweekly schedule as operations stabilize.• DHCS monitors claims data, call center data, grievances, appeals, and utilization management.• DHCS plans to publish monitoring data once a robust dataset is available.• Overall, operations have stabilized, and performance is improving. <p>Sacramento County Medi-Cal Dental Fact Sheet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivered the October 2025 update of the Medi-Cal Dental Fact Sheet, incorporating data as of September 2025 and a comprehensive trend analysis from 2023 to the current period. <p>FFS vs. DMC Performance Fact Sheet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Top 5 Procedure Codes:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 75% consistency in top codes for children (ages 0–20).○ 70% consistency for adults (21+).• Utilization Trends:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>Liberty</i> and <i>Health Net</i> showed modest gains in most categories.○ Slight declines were observed in children’s dental treatments.○ FFS showed significant increases, particularly in preventive and diagnostic services.• Language Line Services:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Top 6 languages accounted for 85% of all calls.○ Over 100 unique languages were requested.○ Liberty DMC handled the largest share of language calls.○ Top languages: Spanish, Russian, Dari, Mandarin, Cantonese, Ukrainian, and others.
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2:20	Approve Term Renewal for Existing MCDAC Members - Shannon McConnell (RDH) and Dr. Timothy Martinez (Health Net Dental Plan Representative)	Motion to approve: Sunanda Bandyopadhyay Second: Robin Blanks-Guster Motion Carried.
2:25	Center for Oral Health/Early Smiles Sacramento Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denise Canacari reported that the Center for Oral Health recently hosted its Older Adults Symposium and 40th Anniversary Gala last month. The event was well attended and well-received, celebrating four decades of service and achievement. Program Activity Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In September, the team screened approximately 60 schools, including elementary, pre-K, and one high school. The October schedule is already fully booked, with screenings planned for around 65 schools. The screening program remains active and busy as operations continue. Service Expansion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The integration of sealant services, previously discussed at the last meeting, is still in progress. Updates will be provided as this initiative develops. Tiffany Turner provided a brief recap of the Older Adults Symposium, focusing on oral health for older adults. The Center for Oral Health is conducting a statewide needs assessment and presented preliminary data at the symposium. The preliminary data will be presented again in partnership with Delta Dental on October 22, 2025. Tiffany will share the presentation information with Jennifer for distribution to all members, emphasizing that it is a highly recommended session.
2:30	California Dental Association Update	Prop 56 Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prop 56 is expected to be eliminated in the Governor's budget proposal in January. Stakeholders are being fully activated immediately in anticipation of the proposal. A larger coalition is being organized, including:

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FQHCs ○ Dental plans (including Western Dental) ○ Consumer groups (e.g., Western Center for Health Access) ○ Medical providers with high patient volume <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The coalition aims to collectively communicate the community impact of eliminating Prop 56 to legislators and the Governor. <p>Advocacy and Lobbying Efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions were raised regarding dental lobbyists who could support advocacy efforts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Multiple groups involved: dental plan lobbyists, DSO lobbyists, consumer organizations. ○ Emphasis on combining lobbyist activity with consumer and provider voices to demonstrate impact. ○ Members encouraged to contact their own legislators. ○ Attend committee hearings when available. ○ Coordinate statewide advocacy to include Sacramento, LA County, and other regions. • The group noted the importance of sign-on letters and coalition letters to reinforce messaging. <p>Letter and Talking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group letter regarding Prop 56 advocacy will be reviewed and potentially sent out in December. • The letter requires updates to reflect the shift from supporting the Governor’s position to opposing Prop 56 eliminations. • Members are encouraged to use letters and talking points when meeting with legislators or visiting district offices.
2:40	MCDAC Oral Health Equity Workgroup: Community Health Worker Training Demonstration	<p>Oral Health Equity Workgroup Acknowledgment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debra Payne recognized the Oral Health Equity Workgroup for their active participation and contributions. • Workgroup meets most Fridays to advance the community health worker (CHW) training program. • Special thanks given to California Northstate University, Dr. Glassman, and Heather Hawkins for significant contributions outside weekly meetings. <p>Community Health Worker Training Program Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Paul Glassman mentioned that California Medi-Cal Dental Program established a payable code for CHWs conducting oral health education and referrals on December 1, 2024.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption has been limited due to low numbers of certified CHWs and the lack of connection to oral health systems. Goal: Develop a low-cost, accessible, online CHW training program to expand certification and integrate CHWs into dental care delivery systems. <p>Program Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be hosted on Canvas LMS via California Northstate University but will be branded and delivered as a MCDAC program. Training meets all statewide CHW certification requirements with heavy emphasis on oral health. Divided into six modules: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction & Overview: Program description, workgroup acknowledgements, introductory video by Debra Payne, handouts. Communication: Interpersonal skills, motivational interviewing, promoting healthy oral habits, culturally congruent strategies, and optional handouts. Service Coordination: Individual assessment, community resource linkage, and handouts on connecting CHWs to services. Policy & Public Health: Policy 101, public health concepts, social determinants of health, understanding legislation, and influence opportunities. Oral Health 101: Basic dental disease prevention, record keeping, liability, infection control, mandated reporting, resources for people with disabilities, and older adults. Orientation for Dental Providers: Best practices for working with CHWs, billing, risk management, and CE credit for dental professionals.
3:00	Shriner Children's Northern California Hospital Introduction and Dental Anesthesiology Discussion	<p>Barriers to Pediatric Dental Care Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Sundeet Tumber presented on the Anesthesia Workforce Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationwide shortage of anesthesiologists; projected shortage of ~6,300 by 2035. Aging workforce: 31% are planning to retire soon. CNA shortages affecting hospital and ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs). Pediatric anesthesia fellowships: 125 graduating annually in the U.S., limiting availability for pediatric patients. Impact on Shriners and local hospitals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ORs fully utilized, delays in care for medically complex children.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited access for patients with certain insurance coverage or complex conditions. ▪ Referral delays may lead to worsened conditions and more complicated surgeries. • Dental Surgery Access for Medically Compromised Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Limited availability of pediatric dental surgery centers in the Sacramento area. ○ Most children requiring anesthesia must go to specialized hospitals (UC Davis, Sutter Downtown, Shriners). ○ Medically compromised children face long wait times (up to 2 years at UC Davis). ○ Access challenges exist even for otherwise healthy children due to competition with other surgical cases at ASCs and hospitals. ○ Example: Difficulty coordinating procedures due to credentialing, equipment, and staffing limitations. • Coordination Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussion on potential coordination for children already undergoing anesthesia for other procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Could dental procedures be incorporated during scheduled surgeries? ▪ Limitations include equipment, credentialing, and staffing challenges. ▪ Acknowledgement of potential opportunities for CCS (California Children's Services) patients. • Transition of Care for Aging Pediatric Patients <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shriners does not treat patients over age 18; transition team helps find adult care resources. ○ Adult care is often routed to UC Davis or Sutter Downtown, particularly for complex conditions (cardiac, burn, orthopedic).
3:25	Health Authority Commission Update	No Update
3:25	Dental Health Plan Updates	Health Net <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felicia Scott started the Health Net plan updates with two upcoming events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 24th Annual Community Health Day in Sacramento – October 19 ○ San Joaquin Health Event – October 24

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- Big Smiles (LA County) and Smile Dental (Sacramento County) – both school-based dental providers partnering with Health Net as part of their Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).
- Collaboration supports new Value-Based Program for school-based dental care.
- Value-Based Program Initiative:
 - Designed to improve return rates for parental consent forms by using student-centered motivation strategies (e.g., class incentives).
 - Focus on improving access and participation in school-based dental programs in both Los Angeles and Sacramento Counties.
- Utilization trends show a slight dip from 2023–2024 post-COVID recovery.
- January–July 2025 data show an increase in children’s dental utilization rates, indicating positive progress.
- Teledentistry:
 - Enhanced focus on teledentistry to address urgent dental needs and improve care coordination.
 - Members in pain are directly routed to teledentistry for immediate consultation and appointment scheduling assistance.
- Community Health Worker (CHW) Collaboration initiative will continue collaboration with Tiffany (Center for Oral Health) through the CHW program.
- Positive outcomes anticipated for improved dental utilization and early intervention.
- Population Needs Assessment (PNA):
 - New DHCS Requirement for dental plans to complete a PNA, aligning dental and medical needs assessments.
 - Health Net is leveraging existing medical PNA processes for integration.
 - Dr. Martinez emphasized collaborating with local public health partners on Sacramento County’s Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and Community Health in Action (CHIA) initiatives.
 - Oral health components are being incorporated into the broader population needs assessment to identify unmet community dental needs.
 - PNA functions similarly to a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) used by hospitals.
 - DHCS encourages collaborative efforts among plans to share data and findings.

DentaQuest

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matthew Mouille mentioned that DentaQuest actively participated in multiple provider and community events, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Healthy Kids Event (Elk Grove) – successful outreach to families and members.○ School Nursing Meeting (SDDS Foundation) – positive engagement and feedback.○ Oral Health Symposium○ NADP and CAP Conferences – strategic collaboration with DSOs to enhance member experience.• Provider Support and Training:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Completed a 4-week provider retraining series addressing feedback since program launch.○ Ongoing provider education to streamline office operations and resolve challenges.○ Upcoming ICD-10 training series for providers, scheduled to launch later this month.• Outreach and Site Visits:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Nearly 100 provider office visits completed in recent weeks; continued expansion planned through year-end.• Aims to improve clarity, access, and navigation for specialty referrals.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Developed three step-by-step referral guides:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provider-facing guide2. Community-Based Organization (CBO) guide3. Member-facing guide (pending DHCS approval) <p>Liberty Dental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Laurie Curfman mentioned an overall network growth observed at Liberty Dental Plan.• 16 new general practitioners, 3 specialists, and 5 new offices were added.• Completed 948 provider service calls and 121 provider visits.• Sent 5,933 text campaigns to members (18% click rate; <1% opt-out).• Community Outreach:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Participated in 23 member events, educating over 1,000 attendees and completing 153 screenings and 19 fluoride applications.• Attended and sponsored multiple events, including Sacramento Public Library, Next Move, Head Start Center, La Familia, North Highlands Recreation, Job Corps, SDDS Nurses' Meeting, and Center for Oral Health's 40th Anniversary Symposium.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received Community Impact Award from the Center for Oral Health. <p>Action Items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were concerns regarding the referral process and requested clarification and correction of the referral and provider listing process, emphasizing barriers such as language and patient navigation challenges. Plans to collaborate before the next meeting to ensure consistent implementation of referral and access systems. Network Adequacy Workgroup to convene and review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral processes across all plans. Training needs for providers using referral tools. Possibility of exceptions to time/distance standards for providers offering specialized care (e.g., general anesthesia). Plans to report back at the next meeting (December 4) with updates on referral alignment and improvements. Encourage professional collaboration between plans and providers to address access issues constructively.
3:58	Public Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially experienced referral disruptions but reported resolution within a few weeks. Praised the new self-referral system for empowering patients to choose their providers directly, calling it “a very good thing for patients.” Noted that while some referrals decreased, the current system avoids bottlenecks in specific offices.
4:02	Announcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy Community Day at Grant High School in Del Paso Heights. The event will include free health screenings, dental checks, haircuts, and a farmers’ market.
4:06	Adjournment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting adjourned by Jonathan Portheus. <p>Next Meeting December 4, 2025 2:00-4:00 PM at East Parkway.</p>