



News Release

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Dental Benefits Restored for 23,000 Medicaid Clients

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Prevention is the best medicine, but for some Medicaid clients, obtaining preventive dental care hasn't always been easy. That will change now that funding was approved for the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) to restore dental benefits for 23,000 Medicaid clients beginning October 1, 2005.

“Our clients are glad these services are being offered again,” said Michael Deily, Director of Division of Health Care Financing, UDOH. “They now have the security of knowing they can see a dentist before problems start.”

Since legislative budget reductions in 2002, adults on Medicaid were only allowed emergency dental care for persistent tooth pain or infection. In July 2005, the Utah State Legislature and the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) approved \$2.2 million to restore more comprehensive dental services for all 23,000 Non-Traditional Medicaid (NTM) clients. Services will include regular teeth cleanings, fillings, simple or complex extractions, routine exams, x-rays, as well as emergency dental care.

Rick Black, a client of NTM for the last five years, knows what it was like to be without routine dental check-ups. Because of high out-of-pocket fees for service, he and his wife, also an NTM client, simply had to go without until now. “If something went wrong,” Black explains, “We just had to bear it out and hope for the best.”

With preventive dental benefits restored, Black and his wife can now forego the worries that accompany high fees for something as simple as getting your teeth cleaned. “We're excited to get this covered—the cleanings, the check-ups, and taking care of cavities,” said Black.

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Of the 177,000 Utahns currently enrolled in Medicaid, 23,000 NTM clients will receive the added dental services. NTM covers adults with children that meet income guidelines and asset requirements, while Traditional Medicaid covers the aged, blind, disabled, pregnant women, and children. The scope of dental services for NTM is now the same as those covered by the Primary Care Network, another state health insurance program.

Medicaid dental providers have been notified about the changes. Next week, the UDOH will send similar notices to NTM clients.

For information about dentists and clinics that provide services for Medicaid clients, or about enrolling in Medicaid, call toll-free 1-800-662-9651. You may also get Medicaid information online at www.health.utah.gov/medicaid.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.