

Florida State Conference of the NAACP Joins Dental Advocacy Coalition to Address Florida's Oral Health Crisis

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TALLAHASSEE, FL, UNITED STATES, October 23, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In the wake of [new data showing rising utilization of hospital emergency rooms](#) by Floridians for treating preventable dental conditions, the Florida State Conference of the NAACP is joining American Children's Campaign and Floridians for Dental Access, the state's largest coalition for dental workforce reform, to increase oral health access in the Sunshine State.



More Florida children use hospital emergency rooms for dental pain than any other state in the nation.

Florida has more individuals living in dental shortage areas than any other state nationwide. Nearly six million Floridians reside in federally-designated Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas, which means they exceed a dentist-to-population ratio of 5,000 to 1, according to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Florida needs an additional 1,256 dentists right now just to remove current shortages.

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The year 2024 showed a steady rise in Floridians utilizing hospitals for treating preventable dental pain and infections, especially for marginalized groups such as those living in rural areas, BIPOC communities or low-income households. In fact, visits by Black Floridians to emergency departments for non-traumatic dental

conditions increased by 31% from 2021 to 2024 – nearly double the 16% rate for other

Floridians. Black Floridians also faced a disproportionate rate of hospitalizations for dental health problems.

“Hospital emergency departments cannot treat the root cause of oral health problems,” explained Dr. Frank Catalanotto, president of Floridians for Dental Access. “They provide temporary pain relief and tell patients to find a dentist, which is a catch-22 since lack of access to a dentist is why they wound up in an emergency department to the first place. They will unfortunately return when the pain returns.”

Oral health affects more than the mouth. Poor oral health is linked with diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and more—conditions that disproportionately affect the Black community both in prevalence and mortality rates.

“The NAACP believes everyone has a right to good health, and we are committed to ending racial health disparities,” stated Donald Hart, president of the Florida State Conference of the NAACP. “We disrupt the status quo by working at the intersection of policy and systems change to drive sustainable impact for all.”

American Children’s Campaign, Floridians for Dental Access, and the Florida State Conference of the NAACP plan to hold town hall meetings throughout Florida in 2026 to discuss how dental therapy is a key part of the solution to Florida’s oral health crisis, as well as educating Floridians on protecting their oral health now that fluoride has been removed from community water systems.

For more information about Florida’s oral health crisis, visit floridiansfordentalaccess.org. HRSA’s Health Professional Shortage Area data is searchable by state, county and professional designation, and can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

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