

Pennsylvania Needs a Dental Checkup

Pennsylvania Dental Association Issues Report on Crisis Level Shortages in Access to Care

HARRISBURG, PA, UNITED STATES, February 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Pennsylvania Dental Association (PDA) is alerting lawmakers, health leaders, and the public to a growing crisis in access to dental care across the Commonwealth. A new PDA report, Pennsylvania's Dentistry Crisis: A Call to Action, reveals the steepest decline in dentist supply in the nation and outlines urgent policy recommendations to restore access, especially in rural communities.

WHAT

PDA's statewide report details: ([Read the full report](#)):

- A 13.3% decline in dentists per 100,000 residents (worst in the U.S.)
- 163 Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas across Pennsylvania
- Long wait times, limited insurance acceptance, and rural access gaps
- Legislative reforms needed to retain dentists and expand care

WHY IT MATTERS

Pennsylvanians—particularly in rural counties—are waiting months or years for appointments, traveling more than 100 miles for care, and relying on emergency rooms for preventable dental issues. New dentists burdened by high student debt are leaving the state due to low reimbursement rates, administrative barriers, and weak insurer accountability. The critical shortage of dental providers, especially in rural areas, is a public health risk.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Standardize credentialing and reduce administrative delays
- Increase reimbursement rates to reflect actual costs
- Strengthen transparency and accountability for dental insurers
- Reinstate comprehensive adult dental benefits in Medicaid

QUOTE

"This is a public health and economic emergency. Without action, access to essential dental care will continue to erode," said Ward Blackwell, PDA Executive Director.

AVAILABILITY

PDA leadership and practicing dentists across Pennsylvania are available for interviews.

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