



AAE POSITION STATEMENT

The following statement was prepared by the AAE Special Committee on Access to Care. AAE members may photocopy this position statement for distribution to patients or referring dentists.

ACCESS TO CARE

The American Association of Endodontists is dedicated to excellence in the art and science of endodontics and to the highest standards of patient care. The Association inspires its members to pursue professional advancement and personal fulfillment through education, research, advocacy, leadership, communication and service.

The AAE, along with the American Dental Association, recognizes that significant challenges prevent many individuals from accessing all aspects of oral health care. Working in collaboration with the ADA, the membership will be actively engaged in recognizing, addressing and resolving these challenges through its expertise and experience in health care delivery. The AAE will support its members in partnering with the various agencies that serve those who might otherwise not have the resources to receive quality dental care.

Federal programs that once assured dental care for the underserved are dwindling. Extreme cuts in adult Medicaid coverage have accelerated lack of access. Adult dental benefits are a target for reduction or elimination. Federal law requires states to cover dental benefits for Medicaid eligible children, but the reimbursement rate is frequently not even at a rate to cover office overhead.

The AAE, along with other dental and community organizations, federal and state governments, and individual dentists, are working to provide solutions for access to dental care. Educating the public on the need for regular preventive dental care and providing the means to deliver that care is paramount.

The AAE advocates for the underserved and provides its members with opportunities to *Step Up!*—to give of themselves, to share their skills and expertise with their fellow community members, and to offer care one-to-one.

The AAE encourages its members to work with the appropriate agencies. This includes agencies within the federal government, the state and local governments, as well as state level academic environments, and community programs that assist impoverished groups. We can positively affect these patients through the special skills offered by our organization of endodontists.

Members of the AAE provide strategic collaboration for and participation in access to care in a number of significant ways:

- Individually
 - Treating patients in their own offices at no cost to the patient
 - Linking with the National Foundation for Dentistry for the Handicapped in its D.D.S. program, a program endorsed by the AAE, other dental specialties and other dental organizations
 - Volunteering at local boards of health
 - Being a volunteer at community clinics
 - Joining and becoming leaders on childrens' school committees
- Collaboratively
 - Participating in ADA national or constituent-and-component-endorsed dental care events that treat underserved patients, such as Give Kids a Smile, Mission of Mercy (MOM) and other programs in their communities

- Serving on a national, state or local dental board to draft strategies for access to care issues
- Being appointed to or elected to ADA Committees, Councils and Board of Trustees through which access to care could be enhanced
- Serving on an AAE committee or Board of Directors to affect the realities and needs of underserved patients
- Planning and implementing new volunteer programs that provide access to care in communities of need
- Taking the lead in investigating and evaluating the feasibility of the use of materials, such as glass ionomer cements, for early intervention in the treatment of dental caries in children
- Educationally
 - Accepting Medicaid plans in dental schools and graduate programs in endodontics to improve access and care for the underserved
 - Partnering with pediatric dentistry residency programs to deliver care, education and preventive treatment
 - Participating in community outreach clinics affiliated with dental institutions to provide vital pulp therapy and endodontic treatment to those in need
- Politically
 - Joining ADPAC to provide dollars for education and to help elect dentists who could affect access to care through legislation in Congress
 - Joining a political campaign for a candidate who supports access to care

Access to quality oral health care should extend to every American. The AAE is proud to be part of a profession working to provide a better solution to treat underserved patients. Together in dentistry, endodontists are working to save the natural dentition and help patients keep their teeth for a lifetime. Although access to oral health care is a complex and vexing issue, multiple solutions will be found by those who understand the issues, create collaborations and dedicate themselves to implementing innovation. The American Association of Endodontists believes that it is the ethical and professional duty of its members, as providers of health care, to strengthen their connection to their patients, profession, community, and society at large by participating in any form of access to care, no matter how small or how large.