NYS COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS
FACTS 2027

COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION of New York State
chcanys.org

# Address the Dental Workforce Crisis

## Access to Dental Care is Essential to Overall Health

- Preventable dental issues are one of the drivers of avoidable emergency room use in the State.
- Poor oral health is connected to cardiovascular disease, respiratory infection, adverse pregnancy outcomes and can also exacerbate chronic conditions such as diabetes.
- Beyond physical health, untreated dental conditions can negatively impact mental health and access to economic opportunities.
- Despite the critical role oral health plays in overall health, New York continues to face significant dental workforce shortages that limit access to timely, affordable dental care, particularly for underserved communities.

## New York Faces a Growing Dental Workforce Shortage

- New York faces a critical shortage of dental professionals, with 163 dental health professional shortage areas (HPSAs) affecting 2.8 million people and only 16.2% of dental needs met.[1]
- More than 9.5 million New Yorkers are enrolled in Medicaid, the Essential Plan, or Child Health Plus (CHIP).[2] Yet, only one-third of New York dentists participate in Medicaid/CHIP.[3]
- For low-income and underserved communities, like those served by CHCs, provider shortages further limit access to affordable dental care.

## Community Health Centers Face Significant Dental Workforce Challenges

- CHCs are often the only source of affordable dental care for the uninsured and people on Medicaid, but struggle to meet patient demand, with some CHCs reporting dental waitlists in the hundreds or even thousands.
- Dentists are among the most difficult positions for CHCs to recruit and retain. CHCs must compete with private practices and other for-profit providers for the limited pool of dental providers.
- CHCs' Medicaid rates do not cover the costs of delivering dental care and further inhibit access.

## Expand New York's Dental Workforce

- NYS should adopt innovative approaches to expand the dental workforce and improve access to care, including:
  - **Create an expedited pathway to licensure for foreign-trained dentists** with multiple years of clinical practice experience, allowing qualified professionals to enter the workforce and begin providing care sooner.
  - **Recognizing dental therapists as a profession in New York State**, like states such as Vermont and Minnesota, to expand the dental care workforce and increase access to preventive and routine dental services.
  - **Enhance CHC Medicaid payments for dental services.**

[1] Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF). (December 2025). Dental Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs).
[2] NYS Office of the State Comptroller. (August 2023). Health Insurance Coverage in New York State.
[3] American Dental Association. (2024). The U.S. Dentist Workforce.