

From Coverage to Care

A two-year assessment of patient access under the Canadian Dental Care Plan

The Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) is a generational achievement.

For the first time, dental coverage has been extended nationally to millions of people for whom cost has long been the barrier to care, and the gains for patients are real and worth protecting. However, coverage has not yet consistently translated into accessible, affordable care for all patients.

2025-2026

6.5M PATIENTS ENROLLED | **3.9M** RECEIVED CARE

WHAT IS WORKING FOR PATIENTS



Access is expanding

The share of Canadians reporting no dental insurance fell from **35%** to **25%**.



Patients value it

88% report a positive experience and **57%** say their oral health is better.



Broad support, broad reach

64% of Canadians support the program, and more than **90%** of dentists now take part. **70%** of dentists support the CDCP.



Oral health is now a national priority

82% of Canadians are aware of the program, and oral health is recognized as essential to overall health.

WHERE PATIENTS STILL FACE BARRIERS



Cost barriers remain for many

37% of patients still report financial barriers, largely because CDCP fees are set below the cost of delivering care, leaving part of the bill with patients.



Confusion at the chair

59% of patients expected care to be completely free, and dental offices are often left explaining coverage appointment by appointment.



Recommended care denied

50% of complete preauthorization requests are denied, and only **17%** of dentists say most recommended care was covered, suggesting patients face gaps in coverage for needed treatment.



Capacity is under strain

7,200 vacancies among hygienists and assistants, administrative burden, and the pullback of the **\$250M** Oral Health Access Fund limit how many patients can be reached, especially in rural and remote communities.

WHAT CDA RECOMMENDS

More than 30 recommendations, grouped into three priorities.

1 Patient care

Align coverage with patients' oral health needs and communicate clearly so patients know what is covered before they are in the chair.

2 Program design

Align fees with the real cost of care to reduce costs for patients, ease preauthorization and administrative barriers, and keep public coverage complementary to existing plans.

3 Oral health strategy

Implement a public review of the program and its targeting effectiveness, strengthen the workforce, protect dental student training, and rebuild oral health data.

THE FOUNDATION IS STRONG

The task now is to ensure coverage consistently translates into accessible, timely, and affordable care for all patients, while protecting that progress over the long term.