



2017 Use of Dental Services Surveys

Special Needs BasicCare & Fee-For-Service Summary Results

July 31, 2017

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2017 dental surveys

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) sponsored dental surveys of people with disabilities in the Medicaid program in 2017. One survey (the “dental user survey”) was administered to people who had received dental services during the year. A different survey (the “dental nonuser survey”) was administered to people who hadn’t received dental services during the year. The surveys were given to people who enrolled in a voluntary managed care program called Special Needs BasicCare (SNBC) and people who did not enroll in the program. The purpose of the surveys was to establish baseline information for the 2017 Special Needs BasicCare (SNBC) Dental Access Project about why people accessed or did not access dental services. DHS encounter claims data showed that less than half of SNBC adults in 2015 (46 percent) received at least one dental visit per year.

The survey responses will help DHS and the managed care organizations:

- Understand people’s experiences with dental services
- Explore reasons for underutilization of dental services
- Identify barriers to the use of dental services
- Share information and knowledge on dental service utilization and access
- Promote meaningful change by identifying opportunities for improvement.

Survey populations

The dental user and nonuser surveys were administered to adults with certified disabilities ages 18 through 64 who lived in the community and were eligible for dental benefits through fee-for-service Medicaid or SNBC.

SNBC is a voluntary managed care program for people who are eligible for Medicaid. SNBC serves people with low incomes between the ages of 18 and 64 who have a developmental, physical or behavioral disability. Health plans manage the program. Currently about 52,000 adults are enrolled in SNBC. Of this group, almost 70 percent are older adults (40 to 64 years old) and nearly 40 percent of enrollees are minorities.

In any given month, approximately 44 percent of people with disabilities over age 18 choose not to enroll in SNBC. DHS pays for their health care services on a fee-for-service basis. Every month, about 55 percent of people with disabilities over age 18 choose to enroll in managed care with a health plan through the SNBC program. The people who choose not to enroll in SNBC are different in some ways than the people who choose SNBC. For example, 74 percent of the people diagnosed with developmental disabilities have chosen not to enroll in SNBC.

Survey administration and instrument

DataStat, Inc., a certified National Committee for Quality Assurance vendor under contract with DHS, conducted the surveys. The surveys followed the standardized DHS Consumer Assessment of Health Plans (CAHPS) mail and telephone follow-up methods and processes: Each respondent received up to four waves of mail with telephone interview calls. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary, and all data collected is confidential.

Different questions were asked in the user survey than the nonuser survey. To develop the questions for the dental user survey, DHS adapted the CAHPS Dental Plan Survey 2.0 instrument. These questions were used to survey adults

enrolled in SNBC managed care or fee-for-service Medicaid who had received one or more dental services during the year.¹ To develop the questions for the dental nonuser survey, DHS consulted members of the Managed Care for People with Disabilities stakeholder committee. These questions were used to develop the nonuser survey for those in SNBC managed care and fee-for-service Medicaid who had not received a dental service within the measurement year.²

Survey methodology

The survey sampling frames were designed to achieve at least 300 returned questionnaires for each sample group (cell) assuming an overall 30 percent survey response rate. The sample cells were stratified by state geographical regions.

Dental user and nonuser survey cells

Geographic stratification
SNBC: Seven metro counties ³
SNBC: Nonmetro counties
Fee for service: Seven metro counties
Fee for service: Nonmetro counties

Deduplication on the random samples of SNBC and fee-for-service enrollees ensured that only one person per household was surveyed and no person was surveyed more than once. Data collection occurred between January 2017 and April 2017. Find additional details on the survey methods at the end of the report.

The questions on the Dental User Survey asked people to evaluate their regular dentist and the dental care they received. For both payer systems, the numbers in the tables show the percentage of people who responded most positively to these questions. The rating scores show the percentage of enrollees who responded most positively (9 or 10) on the two survey questions that asked enrollees to rate their dentist and dental care.

The questions on the Dental Nonuser Survey asked people to answer "agree" or "do not agree" to a series of statements regarding what keeps them from seeing a dentist. For both SNBC and fee for service, the numbers in the tables show the percentage of people who responded "agree" to these questions.

Key findings

When interpreting the survey findings, it is difficult to compare the fee-for-service Medicaid and SNBC populations due to the different characteristics of the populations enrolled in the two delivery systems, such as variable living arrangements, need for caregiver assistance, chronic conditions and more people with

¹ User survey consisted of 26 questions divided into three sections: your regular dentist, your dental care in the last 12 months and about you.

² Nonuser survey consisted of 25 questions divided into two sections: your dental care and about you.

³ Seven metro counties: Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties

developmental disabilities remain in the fee-for-service model. Results were not adjusted to account for the differences in populations, so it is possible that some of the variation between fee-for-service Medicaid and SNBC responses were due to factors other than the delivery system.

SNBC user survey responses

- 85 percent of respondents indicated they had a regular dentist.
- 97 percent had seen their dentist in the last 12 months.
- 78 percent traveled less than 30 miles to see their dentist.
- 60 percent of respondents rated their dentist as a 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale.
- 69 percent reported that their dentist or staff always did everything they could to help them feel as comfortable as possible.
- 62 percent saw their dentist within one month of scheduling an appointment, and 72 percent were able to see their dentist as soon as they wanted if there was an emergency.

SNBC nonuser survey responses

- 36 percent of respondents indicated they tried but could not get an appointment when needed.
- 37 percent cannot find a dentist within 30 miles of their home that will take their insurance.
- 22 percent of respondents reported that they did not see a dentist because they cannot find a dental office that can work with their physical or mobility limitations, and 28 percent indicated that they did not see a dentist because they cannot find a dental office that can work with their sensory limitations.
- 46 percent of respondents reported that they did not see a dentist because they had a previous bad experience, and 33 percent were afraid to visit a dentist.
- 57 percent of respondents reported they were concerned about having to pay for noncovered dental services and that reason kept them from seeing a dentist.

Fee-for-service user survey responses

- 88 percent of respondents indicated they had a regular dentist.
- 98 percent had seen their dentist in the last 12 months.
- 83 percent traveled less than 30 miles to see their dentist.
- 67 percent of respondents rated their dentist as a 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale.
- 75 percent reported that their dentist or staff always did everything they could to help them feel as comfortable as possible.
- 62 percent saw their dentist within one month of scheduling an appointment, and 70 percent were able to see their dentist as soon as they wanted if there was an emergency.

Fee-for-service nonuser survey responses

- 34 percent of respondents indicated they tried but could not get an appointment when needed.
- 38 percent cannot find a dentist within 30 miles of their home that will take their insurance.
- 29 percent of respondents reported that they did not see a dentist because they cannot find a dental office that can work with their physical or mobility limitations, and 25 percent indicated that they did not see a dentist because they cannot find a dental office that can work with their sensory limitations.

- 40 percent reported that they did not see a dentist because they had a previous bad experience, and 28 percent were afraid to visit a dentist.
- 65 percent of respondents reported they were concerned about having to pay for noncovered dental services and that reason kept them from seeing a dentist.

Summary of written comments from SNBC and fee-for-service nonuser survey

The last question in the Dental Nonuser Survey asked respondents if there was anything else they wanted DHS to know about their dental care experience. About two-thirds of the enrollees surveyed, or 566 respondents, provided a written comment. The most frequent and reoccurring comments were about dentures, inability to find a dentist, lack of knowledge about dental benefits and financial concerns about noncovered dental procedures.

Qualitative observations

The demographic characteristics of the SNBC and fee-for-service random survey-sample respondents reflect administrative expectations and overall are consistent with the intent of the initial sampling plan to enable comparisons between the delivery systems. Administrative understanding of the managed care and fee-for-service populations suggests that, although both populations studied are Medicaid enrollees with disabilities, the composition of the types of disabilities can differ. There may be varying proportions of people with intellectual, physical or behavioral disabilities in the adult SNBC or fee-for-service random samples surveyed.

As expected, there are differences between the access challenges faced by SNBC and fee-for-service enrollees seeking dental care. Racial differences are most apparent in the larger proportion of white enrollees in the nonmetro population samples. See respondent characteristics on pages 11 and 12.

The SNBC user and nonuser sample of respondents are similar with the exception that the nonmetro sample has fewer enrollees in the age category of 55-64. The other interesting difference seen is in the “self-reported oral health” ratings between the user and nonuser populations. There is a large difference in how the users and nonusers rate their oral health. All of these demographic differences need to be considered by the reader when interpreting the findings of this survey.

User of dental services

Rating of overall condition of teeth and gums	Excellent or good	Poor
SNBC	27 percent	16 percent
Fee for service	31 percent	13 percent

Nonuser of dental services

Rating of overall condition of teeth and gums	Excellent or good	Poor
SNBC	8 percent	38 percent
Fee for service	9 percent	29 percent

SNBC metro and nonmetro dental user observations: Enrollees living outside the metro area, as expected, need to travel more than 30 miles to see a dentist, possibly due to fewer dentists practicing in rural areas. Fewer nonmetro user respondents reported:

- Seeing a dentist in less than one month when scheduling an appointment
- Seeing a dentist for an emergency as soon as they wanted
- Never waiting more than 15 minutes to see someone for an appointment.

Unexpectedly, given there are fewer dentists and members must travel a greater distance to see a dentist, a greater percentage of nonmetro users have a regular dentist compared to metro users (88 percent compared to 81 percent). The difference in sample demographic may suggest a reason for this difference in ratings, but for people with disabilities, the distance traveled to see a dentist is an important access consideration. Weather, living arrangements and the need for travel assistance are major obstacles to accessing care and a major issue for scheduling appointments for both the enrollee and the community dentist.

Fee-for-service metro and nonmetro dental user observations: Fee-for-service enrollees report similar metro vs. nonmetro ratings as those enrolled in SNBC. Fee-for-service nonmetro dental users reported slightly higher overall ratings of their dental care than SNBC nonmetro dental users, however the overall rating is insignificant based on the differences in the sample size. Similarly, more fee-for-service users report having a regular dentist.

Has a regular dentist	Metro dental user	Nonmetro dental user
SNBC	81 percent	88 percent
Fee for service	85 percent	90 percent

SNBC and fee-for-service metro and nonmetro dental nonuser observations: The focus of the nonuser survey was to identify why enrollees in SNBC and fee for service did not seek dental care and what the access and accessibility barriers were. The survey asked a series of 12 questions on “What keeps you from seeing a

dentist.” Nonmetro SNBC and fee-for-service respondents reported difficulty getting an appointment and travel distance barriers more often.

The comparison of the remaining access and accessibility questions results were mixed for the metro and nonmetro or SNBC/FFS comparisons:

Physical and mobility limitations	Metro dental user	Nonmetro dental user
SNBC	18 percent	26 percent
Fee for service	30 percent	28 percent

Sensory limitations	Metro dental user	Nonmetro dental user
SNBC	26 percent	31 percent
Fee for service	25 percent	26 percent

It is interesting to note that a high percentage of enrollees report emotional (fear, pain, bad previous experience) and financial reasons for not accessing dental care. The final question in the dental nonuser survey asked if a barrier was concerns about having to pay for noncovered dental services, and it had the highest percentage rating of all the nonuser survey questions:

Concerned paying for noncovered services	Metro dental user	Nonmetro dental user
SNBC	58 percent	56 percent
Fee for service	64 percent	66 percent

According to these responses, people with disabilities, without regard to the health care delivery model or their special needs, do not seek dental care because of concerns about out-of-pocket costs. Managed care enrollees receive a member handbook on an annual basis. The handbook, which explains their health care benefits, may account for SNBC enrollees expressing less concern about paying for services.

Conclusions

Use caution when attempting to compare the SNBC and fee-for-service survey responses as there are several limitations to the survey population that may possibly affect answers such as differences in caregiver support, living arrangements, and number and type of chronic conditions the individuals are experiencing.

Understanding the factors that initiate and delay the use of dental services is necessary for health plans to develop tools that adequately speak to enrollees about these issues. The surveys, although carried out on a small scale, may provide an initial step in understanding which barriers people perceive as important in utilization or nonutilization of dental care.

People reported difficulty traveling to a dentist as an issue. Unfortunately, the surveys do not allow for a comparison of dental care service delivery locations that accept Medicaid patients and the location of the respondents. As a result, DHS could not analyze if the reported difficulty in finding Medicaid dentists is due to scarcity, unavailability of such dentists or difficulties Medicaid enrollees experience navigating the dental system. Survey findings suggest that SNBC enrollees may be served better with a case manager or navigator that helps arrange travel services to get to dental appointments and works to connect individuals to dentists that accept their insurance. The SNBC health plans are implementing multiple interventions to increase enrollee access to dental services and working to identify other causal factors that prevent SNBC enrollees from accessing dental services.

Technical notes

2017 SNBC Dental Access Project: The DHS Special Needs Purchasing Division, collaborating with the contracted SNBC health plans (Health Partners, Hennepin Health, Medica, PrimeWest Health, South Country Health Alliance and UCare) and the DHS Direct Care and Treatment Community Dental Clinics (DCT-DC) are developing an improvement project to improve access to dental services for SNBC public program adult enrollees. The project will take place over the next three to five years, focusing on a series of collaborative interventions. The project is based on the belief that community-based dental clinics want and can care for many people with special needs in their community if a small number of access barriers can be overcome. Three project interventions — dental case management, special needs community dentists staff mentoring program and teledentistry demonstrations — are being developed to help community-based dental clinics see how they can care for people with special needs and will be implemented by the health plans beginning in 2018.

Response rate calculation: The response rate is the total number of completed questionnaires divided by the total number of respondents selected.

Completed questionnaire: A questionnaire is considered complete if user survey respondents did not say "no" or no user survey respondents did not say "yes" to the question: "In the last 12 months, did you go to a dentist's office for care?" and if they provided a valid response to at least one additional question.

Summary of sampling quantities and response rates

The study had a goal of receiving at least 300 returned questionnaires for each of the eight sample groups. A total of 7,200 enrollees across all sample groups were selected to participate in the survey.

Questionnaires were mailed to all selected enrollees. Enrollees who did not return a mail questionnaire received telephone calls and were offered the opportunity to complete the questionnaire over the telephone. During the course of the survey, some sampled enrollees were determined to be ineligible. Some were no longer enrolled; some were deceased; others had language problems or incapacities that prevented them from completing the interview.

The response rates shown in the table below are the percentage of those who completed an interview among all those who were eligible to participate.

Population	Quantity mailed	Eligible for analysis	Response rate	Cases for analysis
SNBC dental services user				
Metro	900	847	39 percent	333
Nonmetro	900	846	42 percent	355
SNBC dental services nonuser				
Metro	900	787	23 percent	182
Nonmetro	900	821	28 percent	227
Fee-for-service dental services user				
Metro	900	823	48 percent	395
Nonmetro	900	826	54 percent	443
Fee-for-service dental services nonuser				
Metro	900	707	32 percent	226
Nonmetro	900	726	37 percent	266

Respondent characteristics

Several questions in the both the dental services user and nonuser surveys asked about respondent characteristics. These questions include gender, age, oral health, race and ethnicity. For each program, the percentage of respondents within each of these categories is shown:

SNBC respondent characteristics	Metro dental user	Nonmetro dental user	Metro dental nonuser	Metro dental user
Gender				
• Male	48 percent	45 percent	45 percent	50 percent
• Female	53 percent	55 percent	55 percent	50 percent
Age				
• 18-24	4 percent	4 percent	2 percent	2 percent
• 25-34	11 percent	13 percent	13 percent	8 percent
• 35-44	15 percent	17 percent	12 percent	17 percent
• 45-54	26 percent	28 percent	26 percent	28 percent
• 55-64	43 percent	39 percent	47 percent	45 percent
Self-reported oral health				
• Excellent or very good	29 percent	26 percent	11 percent	6 percent
• Good	30 percent	33 percent	18 percent	28 percent
• Fair or poor	41 percent	41 percent	71 percent	66 percent
Hispanic or Latino				
• Yes	5 percent	3 percent	4 percent	3 percent
• No	95 percent	97 percent	96 percent	97 percent
Race				
• White	62 percent	90 percent	55 percent	87 percent
• Black/African American	26 percent	4 percent	31 percent	4 percent
• Asian	4 percent	1 percent	3 percent	0 percent
• Pacific Islander	1 percent	0 percent	1 percent	0 percent
• American Indian	5 percent	4 percent	3 percent	7 percent
• Other	5 percent	4 percent	3 percent	2 percent

Fee-for-service respondent characteristics	Metro dental user	Nonmetro dental user	Metro dental nonuser	Metro dental user
Gender				
• Male	49 percent	50 percent	50 percent	57 percent
• Female	51 percent	50 percent	50 percent	43 percent
Age				
• 18-24	9 percent	8 percent	7 percent	5 percent
• 25-34	14 percent	17 percent	13 percent	9 percent
• 35-44	14 percent	17 percent	9 percent	12 percent
• 45-54	27 percent	22 percent	21 percent	26 percent
• 55-64	35 percent	36 percent	49 percent	47 percent
Self-reported oral health				
• Excellent or very good	32 percent	29 percent	9 percent	11 percent
• Good	34 percent	31 percent	29 percent	25 percent
• Fair or poor	33 percent	40 percent	62 percent	64 percent
Hispanic or Latino				
• Yes	3 percent	2 percent	3 percent	3 percent
• No	97 percent	98 percent	97 percent	97 percent
Race				
• White	80 percent	92 percent	72 percent	91 percent
• Black/African American	12 percent	1 percent	20 percent	2 percent
• Asian	4 percent	2 percent	2 percent	0 percent
• Pacific Islander	0 percent	0 percent	1 percent	0 percent
• American Indian	2 percent	3 percent	5 percent	3 percent
• Other	4 percent	2 percent	2 percent	2 percent

SNBC dental user result

Your regular dentist	Metro	Nonmetro	Total
Q2: Has regular dentist	81.65 percent	88.57 percent	85.23 percent
Q3: Travels less than 30 miles to see regular dentist	90.31 percent	69.18 percent	78.86 percent
Q4: Has seen regular dentist	98.11 percent	96.76 percent	97.38 percent
Q5: Regular dentist always explained things in a way that was easy to understand	69.41 percent	68.90 percent	69.13 percent
Q6: Regular dentist always listened carefully	71.37 percent	72.24 percent	71.84 percent
Q7: Always treated with courtesy and respect by regular dentist	83.20 percent	83.95 percent	83.60 percent
Q8: Regular dentist always spent enough time with you	69.80 percent	72.24 percent	71.12 percent
Q9: Rating of personal dentist	57.71 percent	62.08 percent	60.07 percent
Your dental care			
Q10: Dentists or dental staff always did everything they could to help you feel as comfortable as possible	70.59 percent	68.93 percent	69.72 percent
Q11: Dentists or dental staff always explained what they were doing while treating you	75.31 percent	71.88 percent	73.51 percent
Q12: Saw dentist less than one month after scheduling appointment	65.81 percent	59.18 percent	62.33 percent
Q13: Saw a dentist for an emergency as soon as you wanted	75.38 percent	68.94 percent	72.14 percent
Q14: Never waited more than 15 minutes to see someone for appointment	49.06 percent	55.52 percent	52.42 percent
Q15: Always told you why there was a delay or how long the delay would be	23.46 percent	18.18 percent	20.89 percent
Q16: Overall rating of dental care	56.65 percent	60.34 percent	58.58 percent

Fee-for-service dental user results

Your regular dentist	Metro	Nonmetro	Total
Q2: Has regular dentist	85.28 percent	90.85 percent	88.21 percent
Q3: Travels less than 30 miles to see regular dentist	91.32 percent	76.35 percent	83.26 percent
Q4: Has seen regular dentist	97.61 percent	98.98 percent	98.35 percent
Q5: Regular dentist always explained things in a way that was easy to understand	72.27 percent	75.13 percent	73.83 percent
Q6: Regular dentist always listened carefully	77.19 percent	73.70 percent	75.28 percent
Q7: Always treated with courtesy and respect by regular dentist	89.44 percent	87.56 percent	88.42 percent
Q8: Regular dentist always spent enough time with you	74.84 percent	73.23 percent	73.97 percent
Q9: Rating of personal dentist	64.89 percent	70.00 percent	67.67 percent
Your dental care			
Q10: Dentists or dental staff always did everything they could to help you feel as comfortable as possible	71.06 percent	79.63 percent	75.61 percent
Q11: Dentists or dental staff always explained what they were doing while treating you	75.06 percent	76.89 percent	76.03 percent
Q12: Saw dentist less than one month after scheduling appointment	65.80 percent	60.19 percent	62.86 percent
Q13: Saw a dentist for an emergency as soon as you wanted	68.61 percent	72.67 percent	70.81 percent
Q14: Never waited more than 15 minutes to see someone for appointment	55.17 percent	64.17 percent	59.95 percent
Q15: Always told you why there was a delay or how long the delay would be	20.23 percent	25.83 percent	22.84 percent
Q16: Overall rating of dental care	60.95 percent	68.21 percent	64.81 percent

SNBC dental nonuser results

What keeps you from seeing a dentist?	Metro	Nonmetro	Total
Q2: Tried but cannot get appointment with a dentist when needed	33.53 percent	38.74 percent	36.46 percent
Q3: Cannot find dentist within 30 miles who will take my plan	28.24 percent	44.44 percent	37.31 percent
Q4: Cannot find dental office that will let me bring service dog/therapy pet	14.00 percent	17.65 percent	15.84 percent
Q5: Cannot find dental office that can work with my physical/mobility limitations	18.28 percent	26.73 percent	22.68 percent
Q6: Cannot find dental office that can work with my sensory limitations	26.32 percent	31.46 percent	28.80 percent
Q7: Don't believe going to dentist is important to health	14.37 percent	18.18 percent	16.50 percent
Q8: Had bad experience seeing a dentist	47.09 percent	45.91 percent	46.43 percent
Q9: Afraid to visit a dentist	37.65 percent	30.18 percent	33.42 percent
Q10: Afraid to get bad news about teeth	39.77 percent	24.09 percent	30.95 percent
Q11: Afraid of being in pain when I go to the dentist	52.33 percent	36.20 percent	43.26 percent
Q12: Have to travel too far to go to dentist	24.85 percent	41.74 percent	34.37 percent
Q13: Concerned about having to pay for non-covered dental services	58.48 percent	56.56 percent	57.40 percent

Fee-for-service dental nonuser results

What keeps you from seeing a dentist?	Metro	Nonmetro	Total
Q2: Tried but cannot get appointment with a dentist when needed	30.37 percent	37.60 percent	34.32 percent
Q3: Cannot find dentist within 30 miles who will take my plan	30.62 percent	45.82 percent	38.91 percent
Q4: Cannot find dental office that will let me bring service dog/therapy pet	14.00 percent	27.45 percent	20.79 percent
Q5: Cannot find dental office that can work with my physical/mobility limitations	30.77 percent	28.70 percent	29.74 percent
Q6: Cannot find dental office that can work with my sensory limitations	25.23 percent	26.47 percent	25.82 percent
Q7: Don't believe going to dentist is important to health	11.57 percent	12.74 percent	12.21 percent
Q8: Had bad experience seeing a dentist	37.16 percent	41.54 percent	39.54 percent
Q9: Afraid to visit a dentist	26.85 percent	28.40 percent	27.70 percent
Q10: Afraid to get bad news about teeth	33.02 percent	27.52 percent	30.02 percent
Q11: Afraid of being in pain when I go to the dentist	40.37 percent	41.31 percent	40.88 percent
Q12: Have to travel too far to go to dentist	23.58 percent	42.29 percent	33.76 percent
Q13: Concerned about having to pay for non-covered dental services	64.98 percent	66.14 percent	65.61 percent