

## Governor Announces \$43 Million Investment to Expand Dental Access

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin

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***Plan intended to improve the health and wellness of folks all over Wisconsin.***

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MADISON – Gov. Tony Evers today announced that his budget will include a \$43 million investment to dental access across the state.

The governor’s initiatives will include an expansion of the Seal-A-Smile program, which provides preventative services for children with high levels of dental care needs primarily through the K-12 school system. Presently, half of eligible schools provide these services to children. Increasing this funding will expand the program's capacity to provide services to more schools and children in our state.



“Increasing dental access across our state requires a comprehensive approach,” said Gov. Evers. “These are critically important initiatives and I’m proud to invest in these programs that will improve the health and wellness of folks all over Wisconsin.”

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Currently, there is a dental workforce shortage in Wisconsin and around the nation. According to data published by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, the most updated estimate is 204 dental providers are needed to remove health shortage area designations in Wisconsin.

Under the governor's proposal, Wisconsin would establish a dental therapist licensure to provide a mid-level dental provider to the dental workforce. It will also include funding that would be awarded to current Wisconsin colleges willing to implement a dental therapist training program to support the development of the dental therapist workforce.

The governor's proposal will also increase the number of low-income dental clinics eligible to receive grant funding to provide safety net services to Medicaid patients and the uninsured.

And recognizing that rural communities often face additional barriers to accessing dental care, the governor's proposal will seek to incentivize providers serving in rural areas by expanding the rural dental loan repayment program.