

# Innovative Collaborations to Increase Tobacco Treatment in Vermont

Reaching Vermont Medicaid members through dental providers

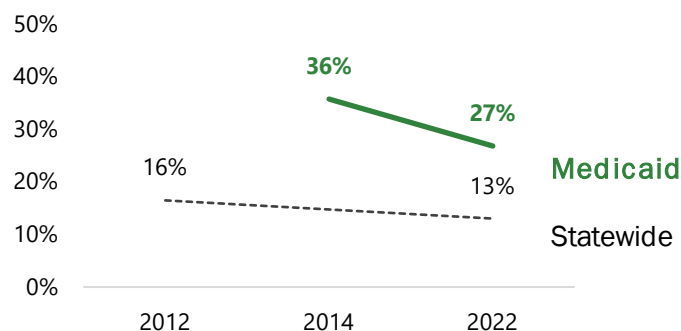


## The impact of tobacco use on oral health and the need for cessation

Cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, and other forms of tobacco cause oral cancer, gum disease, tooth loss, and other oral health problems.<sup>1</sup> Tobacco use and oral health problems also contribute to other chronic conditions including dementia. In 2022, 13% of Vermont adults smoked cigarettes, which is the same as the US average. However, Vermonters' attempts to quit have been declining over the past decade, sparking the need to strategize how to reach people who can benefit from assistance with addressing their tobacco addiction.

Dental providers are respected and see their patients regularly, so they are ideally positioned to assist in tobacco treatment. Building on a long-standing partnership, the Vermont Tobacco Control Program (VTCP) and the Vermont Oral Health Program (Oral Health) sought to expand utilization of cessation treatments by increasing use of the dental code for cessation reimbursement among dental providers.

## Adult smoking prevalence



## Vermont's strong state partnerships catalyze change

From 2021 to 2023, VTCP and Oral Health utilized CDC grant funding to engage in education for dental providers on cessation and marketing and communications campaigns for the promotion of cessation services. Educational activities to provide information on the harms of tobacco and resources for cessation include presentations to dental providers across the state, including dental hygiene students, and receiving approval for accreditation of online trainings so Vermont dental providers can receive continuing education units.

VTCP and Oral Health also launched several communications initiatives, including developing messaging for 802Quits materials to better reflect dental providers' concerns, adding 802Quits information to Oral Health resources, and partnering on marketing campaigns aimed at dental

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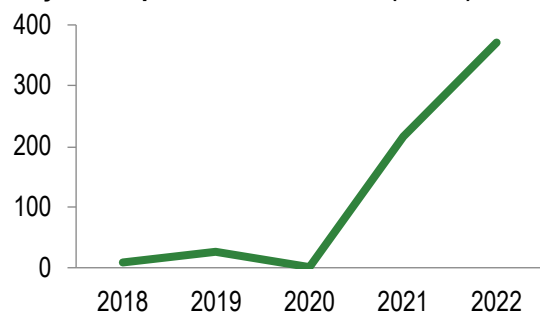
<sup>1</sup> Ford, P. J., & Rich, A. M. (2021). Tobacco use and oral health. *Addiction*, 116(12), 3531-3540.

providers. Additionally, VTCP and Oral Health partnered to develop newsletter and bulletin articles for various organizations promoting the Medicaid billing code for dental providers.

## Medicaid tobacco counseling claims increased from dental providers

To see if strategies to engage dental providers in tobacco cessation were effective, we reviewed Medicaid claims data from 2018 to 2022 to assess changes in use of the brief tobacco intervention codes by dental providers (D1320). From 2018 to 2020, there were an average of 12 claims per year from dental providers for brief tobacco interventions. In 2021 there were 217 claims from dental providers for brief tobacco interventions. In 2022, the number of claims from dental providers for brief tobacco interventions increased to 371. Engaging with dental providers for tobacco cessation treatment in Vermont increased access to treatment for Vermonters by providing education and treatment across multiple settings in the community.

Brief tobacco intervention Medicaid claims by dental providers in Vermont (D1320)



In addition to the increased cessation treatment counseling provided by dental providers, the work in Vermont on the oral health impacts of tobacco has strengthened state-level agency partnerships. Debora Teixeira, Oral Health Systems Administrator/802 Smiles Network Coordinator at Vermont Department of Health, said, *"It has been extremely beneficial to partner with our Tobacco Control Program to brainstorm strategies to foster participation of the dental community in tobacco cessation efforts through our programming, and we look forward to continuing this collaboration for the achievement of mutual goals."*