Vermont’s 2019 5-year State Health Improvement Plan identifies oral health as an area of focus and Vermonters with disabilities as a priority population.

**Adults with a disability are less likely to go to the dentist than adults with no disability.**

Vermont adults with a disability are less likely to report visiting the dentist in the last year by all age categories except young adults (18-30 years of age). Adults with all disability types are less likely to visit the dentist. Just half of adults with a mobility disability (50%) or hearing disability (47%) went to the dentist last year.

**Adults with a disability are more likely to have six or more teeth removed than adults with no disability.**

Vermonters with a disability are at least twice as likely to have had six or more teeth removed for all ages.

**Six or more teeth extracted**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>With a disability</th>
<th>No disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages 18-30</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 31-44</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 45-64</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 65+</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even with risk factors like diabetes or cigarette use present, adults with no disability are still less likely to have had any teeth extracted compared to adults with a disability.

**One or more tooth extraction among adults**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factor</th>
<th>With a disability</th>
<th>No disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>No disability</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With a disability</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Diabetes</td>
<td></td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarette Use</td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Cigarette Use</td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2016 VT Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System;
All differences between adults with a disability and no disability are statistically significant.
Disability in Vermont

1 in 4 Vermont adults has a disability

Adults who report difficulty with one or more of the following are included as having a disability:

- Walking or climbing stairs
- Concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Hearing or deafness
- Doing errands alone
- Seeing even with glasses or blindness
- Dressing or bathing

About the same amount of adult men and women report having a disability:

- 24% of males
- 26% of females

Here are a few steps your dental office can take to help serve Vermonters with disabilities:

- **Accessibility assessment:** Conduct an accessibility assessment of your office. ADA checklists can be found at:
  https://www.ada.gov/medcare_mobility_ta/medcare_ta.htm

- **Professional Development, free CEU credits:**
  - National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center, serving children with special health care needs:
    https://www.mchoralhealth.org/SpecialCare/
  - National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research: Care for People with Developmental Disabilities:
    https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/health-info/developmental-disabilities/more-info


- **Dental Lifeline Network:** Volunteer dentists and specialists needed - To give back to your community or gain experience providing care to patients with disabilities, visit https://dentallifeline.org/vermont/.

"Finding ways to make dental services more accessible will greatly improve oral health of Vermonters with disabilities. Helping this vulnerable population is something we should all be striving for."

- Dr. Cassandra Coakley, President of the Vermont State Dental Society

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