

# Michigan Rural Oral Health

The state of oral health access

*Emily Norrix, MPH*



☐ Not Designated

Data Source: HRSA Data Warehouse, as of 03/13/2025.  
Map prepared by MDHHS Workforce/Access & Grants Management.  
Michigan Primary Care Office (PCO).

# Healthy Michigan Plan providers



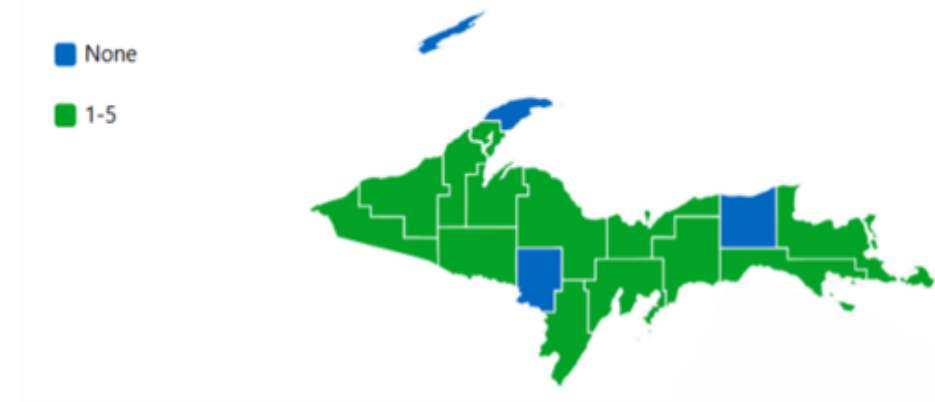
Number of Healthy Michigan Plan (HMP) Providers	
None	Dickinson, Keweenaw, Luce
1-5	Alger, Baraga, Chippewa, Delta, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Mackinac, Menominee, Ontonagon, Schoolcraft
6-10	Marquette

<sup>2</sup> Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). Healthy Michigan Plan: Who is eligible. Retrieved from <https://www.michigan.gov/healthymiplan/who>

# Healthy Kids Dental Providers



Number of Delta Dental Healthy Kids Dental (HKD) Plan Providers	
None	Keweenaw, Luce
1-5	Alger, Baraga, Chippewa, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Iron, Mackinac, Menominee, Ontonagon, Schoolcraft
6-10	Houghton, Marquette



Number of BCBSM Healthy Kids Dental (HKD) Plan Providers	
None	Dickinson, Keweenaw, Luce
1-5	Alger, Baraga, Chippewa, Delta, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Mackinac, Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagon, Schoolcraft

# State of the state: workforce shortage

Michigan needs  
at least **300**  
additional  
dentists,  
especially in rural  
communities.



# State of the state: workforce shortage



- The demand for registered dental hygienists (RDH) is even higher.
- Dental assistants (DA) are also in high demand.

We are seeing schedules booking out up to 1.5 years in advance in some rural communities.

There are not quick solutions for this.







- We need rural residents to go into the dental professions. Specifically, dental assistants (DA), hygienists, and dentists.
- If you know people who are job hunting right now and are interested in a medical career there are multiple programs up here which will train DA's onsite. And pay you while you learn!

# Emerging challenges

- Fluoridation opposition
- Medicaid uncertainty
- Increasing number of providers dropping HKD or simply unable to take on new patients.
- Increasing number of providers leaving all insurance networks.

# What is on the horizon?

- Feasibility study ongoing at Northern Michigan University to establish an RDH program.
  - This would be incredibly helpful for the UP and northern Michigan.
- North Central Michigan College in Petosky is also aiming to start an RDH (Associate) Program.
- Dental Therapy program under development at Ferris State University.
  - Housed in Grand Rapids.
- Kindergarten oral health assessments happening in ALL counties and the City of Detroit.

# Finding a dental provider

- Have the beneficiary contact their dental health plan
- If they are still having issues have them contact their Medicaid Health plan



# Transportation

- Beginning October 1, 2024 all Medicaid Health Plans are required to provide transportation to dental services.



- Effective April 1, 2023 increased reimbursement to 100% of the average commercial rate and increased services to include crowns, root canals and periodontal therapy.

- RHC's are currently not able to bill Medicaid for dental services.
- Other states have changed this.
- Challenges and opportunity.
- RHC's CAN do fluoride varnish right now as part of a medical encounter



# Varnish MI Program



- MDHHS can provide free fluoride varnish
  - We ask for biannual reporting. It's very minimal.
- Training to all relevant office staff (virtual or in person)
- Varnish can be delegated by the provider to an MA or nursing staff
- Easy intervention
- For more information, reach out to [oralhealth@Michigan.gov](mailto:oralhealth@Michigan.gov) or directly to [Beaversh1@Michigan.gov](mailto:Beaversh1@Michigan.gov)

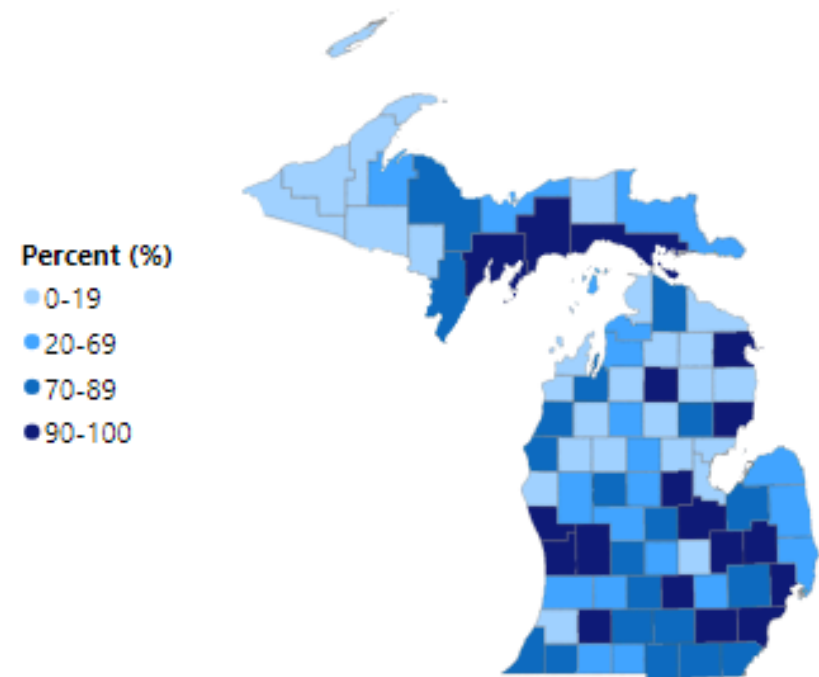


# Fluoridation

# Water, naturally-

- Michigan has 197 Public Water Systems that are naturally fluoridated at 0.6 ppm or higher-
- Optimally fluoridated water is 0.7 ppm with a range of .6-1.0 ppm
- Our surface water bodies of the Great Lakes have an average fluoride level of 0.3-0.5 ppm

**Percent on Community Water System with Access to Optimally Fluoridated Water**



## My Water's Fluoride Home

## About My Water's Fluoride

## Community Water Fluoridation

## State Fluoridation Reports

## My Water's Fluoride Glossary

## Related Sites

## Oral Health Resources

## Other Data Systems

[Oral Health Home](#)

Water with fluoride protects teeth from tooth decay



It is Important to know the level of fluoride in your drinking water.

My Water's Fluoride (MWF) allows consumers to learn about the fluoride level in their drinking water. Also, you can find out the number of people served by the system and the water source. [Learn more >](#)

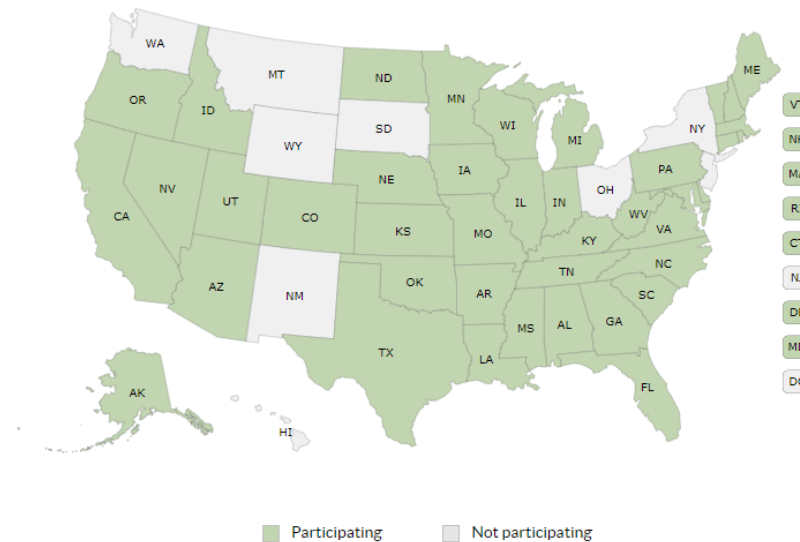
## Find Water System Information

Participating State

Select one



Can't find your state ?

[Search by Water System](#)

See for yourself!

- Select the state, select the county-
  - From here, you can select the specific water system –or-

Go to the State Fluoridation Reports

**Average Fluoride Levels by Month Report**



[Average Fluoride Levels by Month Report](#)

The Average Fluoride Levels by Month Report displays the reported operational fluoride level for adjusted or monitored defluoridated community water systems by year. Information in this report is provided by the state. Operational data for the current calendar year may be incomplete. For questions about information in the report, contact the state.

# Recommended resources

- [Fluoridation](#) (American Academy of Pediatrics)
- [I Like My Teeth](#) (associated with the AAP) infographics, fact sheets etc
- [Fluoridation Facts, 2025 E-book page ii](#) ADA resource that answers every question ever asked about fluoridation

# If you want to dig deeper into fluoride



- Sandy Sutton, RDH, BS
- Oral Health Prevention Specialist
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
- 517-582-8593
- [suttons2@michigan.gov](mailto:suttons2@michigan.gov)
- Able to answer questions, as well as give presentations and training to your clinic

# Practical take aways

- Know the dental situation in your community. Who takes what insurance, what does the waitlist look like etc.
- Inform patients about the dental shortages and the importance of not missing appointments for themselves and their families.
- The fluoridation debate isn't going to go away. Prepare yourselves to be a resource for patients- especially since many likely do not have a dental home.

Thank you!  
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