

What Constituents Should Know About the CDCP

The Canadian Dental Care Program (CDCP) covers millions of Canadians. The Canadian Dental Association (CDA) is continually tracking issues to improve CDCP outcomes for patients and our members. We thank you for your interest in the oral health of Canadians. Below are some quick facts that your constituents should know before they go to the dentist:

CDCP does not cover all dental care costs.

- Depending on family income, patients may be responsible for a portion of costs through co-payments.
- CDCP reimbursement rates are generally lower than standard dental fees, which may result in additional out-of-pocket expenses.

Some treatments require preauthorization.

- Certain treatments, such as crowns and partial dentures, require prior approval from CDCP.
- While dentists recommend appropriate care, CDCP reviews and approves these services. Approvals may not always align with dentists' recommendations.
- Close to half of preauthorization requests are denied.

Coverage may be limited for patients with complex needs.

- CDCP offers a range of services that can meet the basic needs of eligible patients.
- But for those with more complex dental needs, some services may not be covered under the program.



Who We Are About Us

Founded in 1902, the Canadian Dental Association (CDA) is a federally incorporated not-for-profit organization whose corporate members are Canada's provincial and territorial dental associations (PTDAs). CDA represents over 21,000 practising dentists nationwide and is a trusted brand and source of information for and about the dental profession on national and international issues.

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CDA 2025 Days on the Hill



**Canadian
Dental Association**

Close the Care Gap: Fix Oral Health Workforce Challenges

- Dental offices in Canada are struggling to recruit and retain dental assistants and dental hygienists to meet patient demand.
- **80%** of dental offices report staffing challenges.
- Roughly half of dental offices report difficulty recruiting dental assistants (**46.5%**) and hygienists (**50.2%**).
- In 2023, more than **7,200** dental assistant and dental hygienist roles went unfilled, especially in rural and underserved communities.
- These challenges reduce patient access, increase wait times and put additional strain on dental staff.

What the federal government can do:

- **Expand student loan forgiveness** to dentists and oral health providers in underserved communities.
- Make dental assisting eligible for the **Post-Graduate Work Permit (PGWP)**.
- **Fund a national oral health workforce data initiative** to target shortages where patients need care the most.
- **Help facilitate labour mobility** for oral health professionals.

Supporting Dental Education to Strengthen Patient Care

- Dental students are facing an unintended consequence of the CDCP. Patients are shifting away from dental school teaching clinics.
- Most schools report fewer patients, eroding access to the training dental students need to graduate.
- Lengthy and complex CDCP preauthorization requirements, combined with low approval rates, are preventing dental students from gaining essential hands-on experience in key clinical competencies.
- Dental students are sharing patients and missing exposure to performing crowns, dentures, and root canals, lowering readiness for practise.
- As the CDCP expands in 2025 to cover an additional **4.5 million** Canadians, these challenges will get worse.

What the federal government can do:

Short term

Stabilize training and patient care by:

- Ensuring the CDCP preauthorization process supports timely care for patients and clinical training for dental students.
- Providing temporary funding for patient care in dental school clinics to help ensure students meet graduation requirements.

Long term

- Convene FPT health and education ministers with oral health stakeholders to launch a sustainable training model so dental students across Canada complete their training in the community.

Ensure CDCP Operates Smoothly: Delivering the Best Results for Patients

- Denied treatments and communication gaps are creating confusion, frustration and barriers to timely care.
- Nearly half of all preauthorization requests for necessary dental treatments are denied.
- **4 in 5 dentists (80%)** report that these denials have significantly or moderately affected oral health outcomes for patients.
- **Nearly half** of dentists describe their experience with the preauthorization process as mostly negative.
- Nearly **30%** of CDCP patients were surprised by out-of-pocket costs, believing their care would be fully covered.
- Before their first CDCP visit, **40%** of patients said they lacked information about which services were covered.
- Among eligible patients who haven't yet seen a dentist, half say they're unsure how to use their coverage.

What the federal government can do:

- **Streamline the preauthorization process**, with clearer criteria and reasons why patients are denied treatment, service standards, and fixes to system errors.
- **Improve government communications** so that patient expectations match reality and care can proceed without frustration.