



- Health Action New Mexico
- New Mexico Oral Health Coalition
- Albuquerque Area Indian Health Service

The task force would be asked to report its findings and recommendations to the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee and the Legislative Finance Committee before November 1, 2019.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

There would be a cost in personnel time to the DOH in convening the requested task force, and in compiling and presenting its reports. DOH estimates that its cost would be approximately \$15 thousand “to support the study and publication in addition to existing staff time.”

### **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

DOH points out that “Tooth decay is the most prevalent chronic condition among children in the United States. “More than one-quarter of US preschoolers (28%) have experienced visible cavities well before entering school. The consequences of dental disease have taken a toll on children, their families, and communities. This has led policymakers to consider a variety of strategies to address the oral health burden among US children.

According to American Dental Association data, only 38 per cent of US dentists accept Medicaid; in New Mexico, where some 72 per cent of births are covered by Medicaid, the percentage of dentists accepting Medicaid is somewhat higher, at 49.8 per cent. New Mexico Medicaid payments to dentists average 58.9 per cent as much as payments from private dental insurance. The ADA data, at

[https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/Files/HPIgraphic\\_0417\\_1.pdf?la=en](https://www.ada.org/~media/ADA/Science%20and%20Research/HPI/Files/HPIgraphic_0417_1.pdf?la=en),

indicate a linear relationship among the states between Medicaid payment and Medicaid participation.

DOH notes that Senate Memorial 96 and the resultant possibility of increased Medicaid dental benefits might help “to provide additional dental care services for a significant number of children in the most underserved communities in our state.”

**RELATIONSHIP** to House Bill 308, which would establish the profession of dental therapy within New Mexico, a way of having mid-level dental practitioners available especially in areas of especially high need. HB 308 would also establish minimum qualifications for a DOH Director of Oral Health; its third provision is to require a dental exam of students before they enroll in school. HB308 in turn is related to 2015 Senate Memorial 136, which set up a Dental Therapy Task Force.

LAC/sb