2013 Summary of Positions

A summary of the Idaho State Dental Association’s (ISDA) position on several issues germane to the dental industry. The ISDA represents 800 licensed and practicing dentists in the state of Idaho, and is the leading authority on oral health in Idaho.

Barriers to Care: Every Idahoan deserves a dentist and the opportunity for good oral health.

Oral health is much more than an attractive smile – many problems can begin in the mouth and lead to costly medical problems. While dental disease is almost 100% preventable, lack of regular care means many problems are not addressed until they are acute – and expensive to fix. Regular, routine preventative care would save much suffering and millions of dollars in unnecessary costs. Unfortunately, barriers still exist to realizing this ideal.

The ISDA supports the following activities and issues to reduce the barriers to care:

- **Donating care.** Through their 10,000 Smiles program, Idaho dentists are committed to treating 10,000 needy Idahoans annually at no cost.
- **Public education and advocacy for prevention.** Idaho dentists participate in public education efforts to help maintain good oral health, communicating with parents, children in schools, and with patients in the dental office.
- **Medicaid: Advocating for access to oral health by working to:**
  - Allowing all licensed and qualified dentist to serve on the Medicaid provider panel, if they desire
  - Support Medicaid funding levels to cover cost-based coverage for dental services
  - Continue to work on restoration of adult dental benefits for Idaho’s Medicaid dependent adults
  - Promote enrollment in Idaho Smiles program so no eligible child falls through the cracks
  - Maintain the Medicaid adult emergency care provision and funding for eligible pregnant women
- **Support new financing tools for consumers.** According to recent research conducted by the American Dental Association, one of the greatest barriers to accessing care is cost. The ISDA is looking at new ways to use the health savings account model as a new financing tool for oral health care costs.
- **Encouraging access to fluoride for young children.** Idaho dentists educate community leaders and policy makers about the importance of community water fluoridation and other preventative measures to prevent cavities in children.
- **Promoting incentives for dentists to serve in rural Idaho.** Encourage new dentists to take advantage of a federal student loan repayment program in exchange for practicing in rural and underserved Idaho communities.

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ISDA, headquartered in Boise, is 115 years old and represents more than 800 practicing licensed dentists and is the state’s leading authority on oral health in Idaho. It is a constituent of the American Dental Association, the professional organization of dentists throughout the U.S. who are dedicated to providing the best care for their patients. ISDA is also affiliated with seven local district dental societies across Idaho. Visit www.theisda.org for more information.

For good oral health tips please visit the Idaho State Dental Association’s facebook page

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The ISDA opposes efforts to create new non-dentist provider or other categories of allied health professionals. Our goal is to maintain the highest level of professional care. This designation is unneeded and would not improve the availability of care. The entire dental office works as a team to deliver high-quality patient care.

- The ISDA opposes any legislation to reduce the level of dental hygienists supervision. Our foremost priority is to maintain patient safety and promote the highest level of care for all Idahoans. Legislation that would weaken or remove supervision of hygienists is unneeded and would not improve either the quality or availability of dental care in Idaho. In fact, unsupervised practice would create a barrier to the continuity and continuum of care patients already enjoy today.

- The ISDA opposes any efforts to allow qualified dental hygienists to conduct restorative dental work in any Idaho setting. The rules currently allow this practice in "extended access" settings limited to district health centers, schools, hospitals and clinics. In the past there have been efforts to amend this rule to allow hygienists to conduct restorative work in both public and private dental settings.

Personal Property Taxes

The personal property tax applies to all businesses in Idaho and covers machinery, tools, furnishings, equipment, and some fixtures. It is one of the most difficult to administer and comply with for both businesses and government. Private practice dentists, like all other businesses must comply with this onerous tax. Given the extensive amount of equipment required for even a small dental office, and the cost or value of that equipment, this tax is a significant tax burden for dentists.

The ISDA supports legislation to either repeal or phase-out this onerous tax.

Board of Dentistry – Dental Practice Act Revisions

The Idaho Board of Dentistry will be working on legislation in 2013 that would revise Idaho Code 54-924 regarding dental practice ownership and operation. The proposed legislation would amend the law to correct the fact that our statute does not currently take into account professional limited liability companies which have been referenced in Idaho Code since the 1990s. Dentists are specifically included in the list of professions that can form PLLCs as long as all members are duly licensed to render the same professional services. Under the dental practice act amended dentists are prevented from forming PLLCs unless the true names of all members are used in the name of the PLLC. The Board's legislation also proposes to add a new subsection (14) which would clarify that a dentist may not engage in the practice of dentistry with any person/business entity not licensed to practice dentistry in Idaho.

States have the authority to regulate who can own and operate a dental practice, employ a dentist, and the level of control non-dentist owners and managers may exercise over a dental practice. The potential for interference by non-dentists in the operation of a dental practice continues to be a concern. This effort is very much in line with ADA principles.

ISDA supports legislation to revise and clarify Idaho Code regarding dental practice ownership and operation.

Health Care Exchanges: The Health Care Exchange in Idaho should be a state-based exchange.

Health care providers across the United States are going through significant changes and challenges at this time, ranging from the impact of a sluggish economy and government budget cuts to the uncertain path of health care reform. Dentists are not immune to these challenges and are navigating their way through these issues as small business owners as well as health care providers. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) allows for dental benefits and freestanding dental plans, but does not require them, except for pediatric plans. Oral health is as important to our overall well-being as primary health care services, regardless of age.

The ISDA continues to support an Idaho State Exchange that would include oral health benefits and dental plans for both pediatric and adult patients and should not be limited to traditional insurance plans. We have concerns about a federally imposed exchange. We believe that an Idaho solution will always work better.

Medicaid Expansion in Idaho

The Supreme Court ruling on the Affordable Care Act left Medicaid Expansion to adults with incomes below 133% of the federal poverty level as a state decision. Governor Otter established a group to evaluate the cost/benefit of expansion. Under the ACA, the federal government will pay 100% of the cost of covering the expanded Medicaid population from 2014 through 2016. After the first three years, the federal match for this part of the Medicaid group will be no less than 90% ongoing. Expansion isn’t necessarily permanent. States can expand their Medicaid plans and then retract the expansion at a later time if they choose to do so. The population newly eligible for Medicaid will receive a benchmark benefit provided in the ACA. Dental benefits are required for children but are optional for adults.

The ISDA supports the expansion of Medicaid in Idaho and the inclusion of dental benefits for adults.