

Rooted in Health: Bringing Dental Care Within Reach

Prioritizing oral health
through workforce
development and
treatment expansion



Too many rural Kentuckians have no dental provider to call. Rooted in Health is expanding the workforce and advancing the training that makes treatment possible.

When there is no provider nearby, small problems become serious ones. Rooted in Health prioritizes getting people out of the emergency room and into a place where coordinated care can meet more dental needs.

Here's what that looks like in practice:

- ▶ Training and placing more dental hygienists in rural Kentucky communities so more people have somewhere to turn.
- ▶ Bringing teledental and mobile dental services to rural communities so people drive less and get care sooner.
- ▶ Equipping general dentists in rural communities with advanced continuing education for surgical extractions to decrease wait times and reduce referrals.

Only about 28% of all dentists
in Kentucky practice in **rural areas.**

Routine dental care within reach.

Thirty-two counties have a worse dentist-to-population ratio than the national average, and five counties have no practicing dentists at all. This means a simple cleaning often requires a long drive, a long wait, or both.

**Oral health and overall health go hand in hand.
Rooted in Health is making sure rural Kentuckians can have both.**

▶ Getting care when it can't wait

When there is no provider nearby, a small problem can quickly become a serious one. Mobile dental units, teledentistry, and expanded extraction training work to make sure rural Kentuckians can get care before that happens.

▶ Expanding access by building the workforce

More providers where people live means care that doesn't depend on how far someone can drive. More dental hygienists and assistants expand schedules. Community Health Workers get patients in the door.

▶ Preventing the next problem

When providers are available and care is within reach, people can get a cleaning before it becomes a cavity and treat a cavity before it becomes a crisis. Routine care is how rural Kentuckians stop managing dental emergencies and start maintaining their health.

Working to transform the state's dental landscape:

Workforce development and training

- ▶ Supporting the development of new dental hygiene programs and expanding existing ones to grow the pipeline of providers in rural Kentucky
- ▶ Partnering with dental colleges to create hubs that connect patients to specialists and reduce transportation barriers
- ▶ Embedding dental assistant training in rural communities to increase the availability of oral health workforce

Reducing the Wait and Drive

- ▶ Teledentistry provides triage and referral support to public health hygienists, allowing hygienists to connect patients to care
- ▶ Mobile dental units bring complex care, including extractions and denture services, directly to rural communities



Kentucky Rural Health Transformation Five programs. One promise.

ruralhealthplan.ky.gov

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