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Dental ER Visits: Evidence of a Failed System

Shelly Gehshan
AACDP Conference
April 29, 2012

Overview of Pew's findings

- Preventable dental conditions were the primary diagnosis in **830,590** visits to hospital ERs nationwide in 2009 — a 16% increase from 2006.
- Children accounted for nearly **50,000** of these ER visits.
- Many ER visits are made by Medicaid enrollees or the uninsured. Taxpayers and consumers pay a high price for this incomplete care.



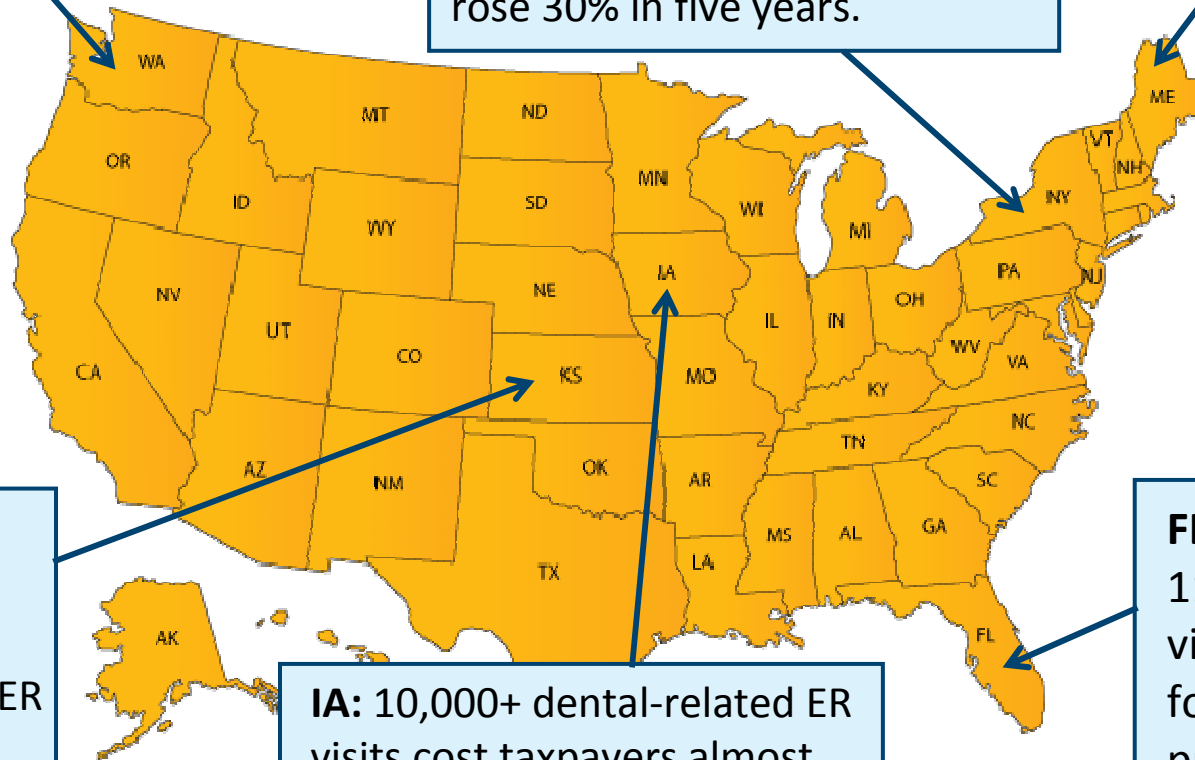


States feel the impact

WA: A study found that a trip to the ER was the first “dental visit” for 1 in 4 children.

NY: The average charge per ER dental visit for young children rose 30% in five years.

ME: Dental disease was the leading reason for ER visits by Medicaid enrollees and uninsured young people.

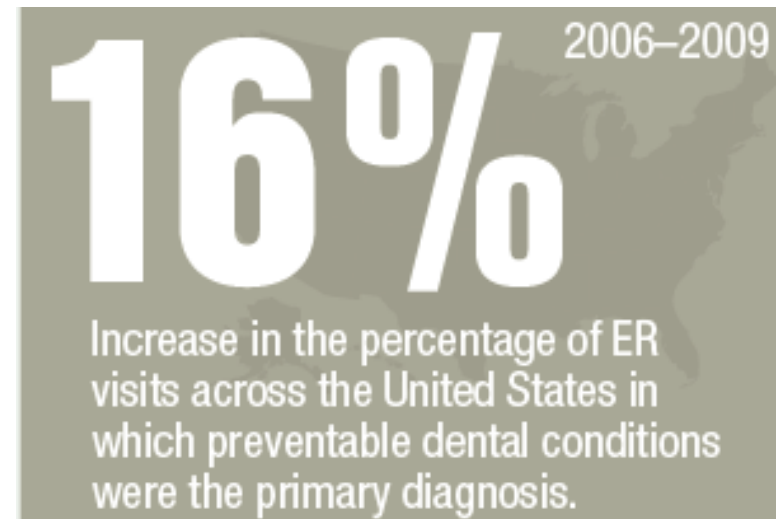
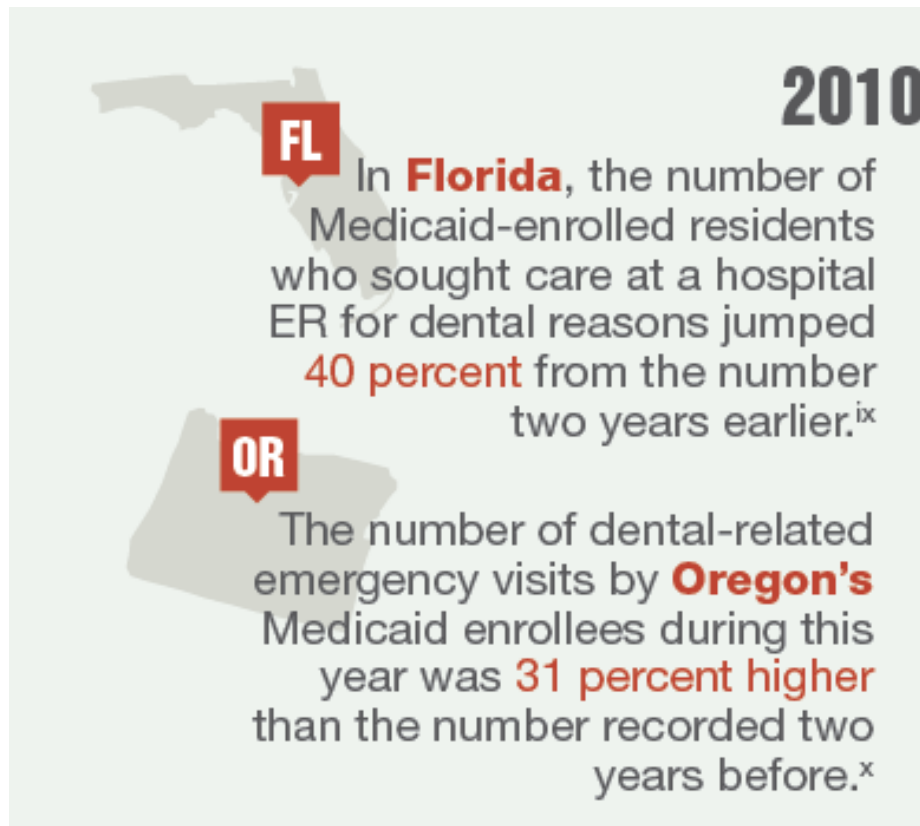


KS: Hospitals reported more than 17,500 dental-related ER visits in 2010.

IA: 10,000+ dental-related ER visits cost taxpayers almost \$5 million in 2007.

FL: There were 115,000+ ER visits in 2010 for dental problems.

Disturbing trend: ER use for dental problems



Costly, inadequate care

It is a very rare event when I do not see one dental complaint during a (12-hour) shift.

Dr. Alan Sorkey,
ER physician in Louisiana

\$88 million **FL** More than 115,000 hospital ER visits for dental problems produced charges exceeding \$88 million (2010).ⁱ

\$23 million **GA** The approximately 60,000 emergency hospital visits for non-traumatic dental problems or other oral health issues cost more than \$23 million (2007).ⁱⁱ

\$5 million **IA** More than 10,000 visits to hospital ERs for dental reasons cost Medicaid or other public programs almost \$5 million (2007).ⁱⁱⁱ

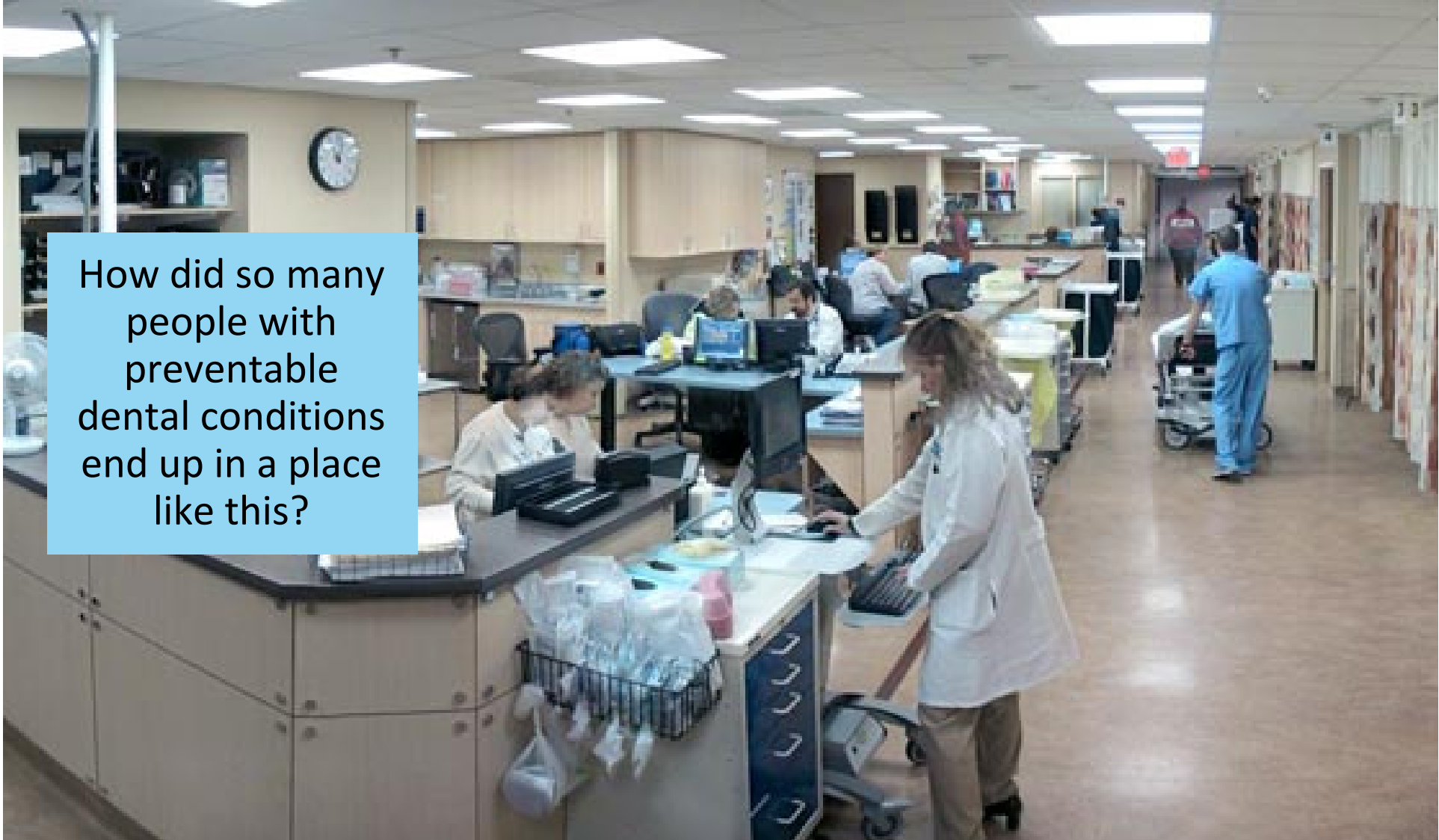
\$4.7 million **MN** The 10,000-plus dental-related ER visits to seven hospitals in the state's largest urban area cost more than \$4.7 million (2005).^{iv}

The wrong care in the wrong place at the wrong time for desperate patients



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How did so many people with preventable dental conditions end up in a place like this?



Pew's report strikes a cord



- Pew's report on ER visits received more than **21 million** media impressions.
- ABC World News cited Pew's data in a dental story that aired on April 24.
- 32 of the 50 largest newspapers published stories about the ER problem.

**CBS
NEWS**

**Chicago
Tribune**



**WALL STREET JOURNAL
Newsday**

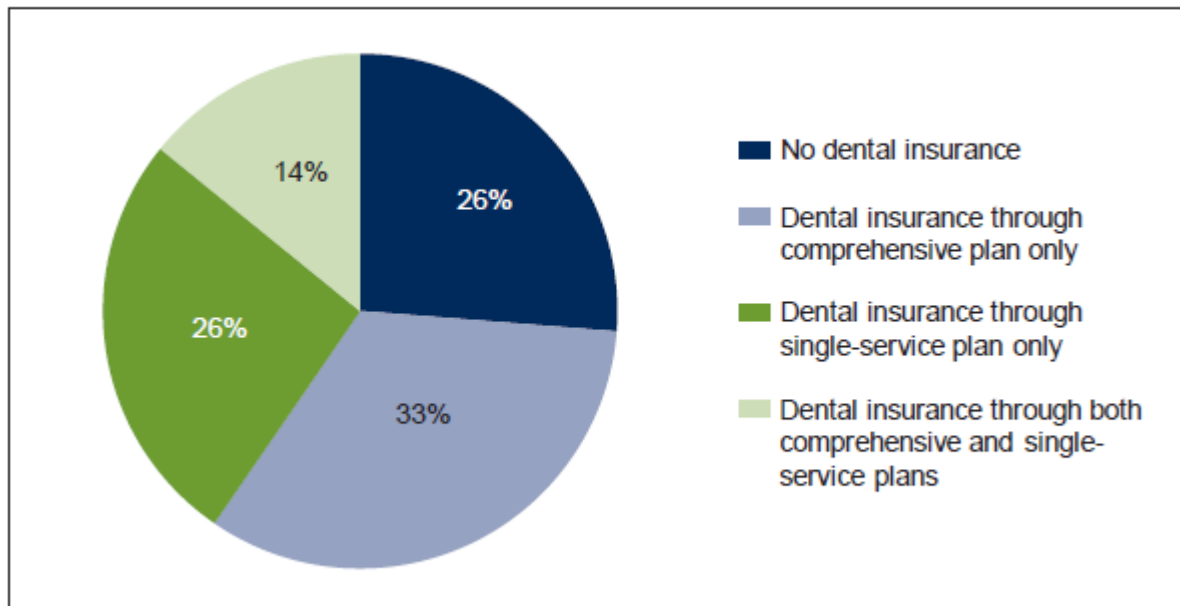
The Washington Post

The Detroit News

Why is this happening?

Millions lack dental insurance

Figure 1. Percent distribution of dental insurance status for persons under age 65 years with private health insurance: United States, 2008

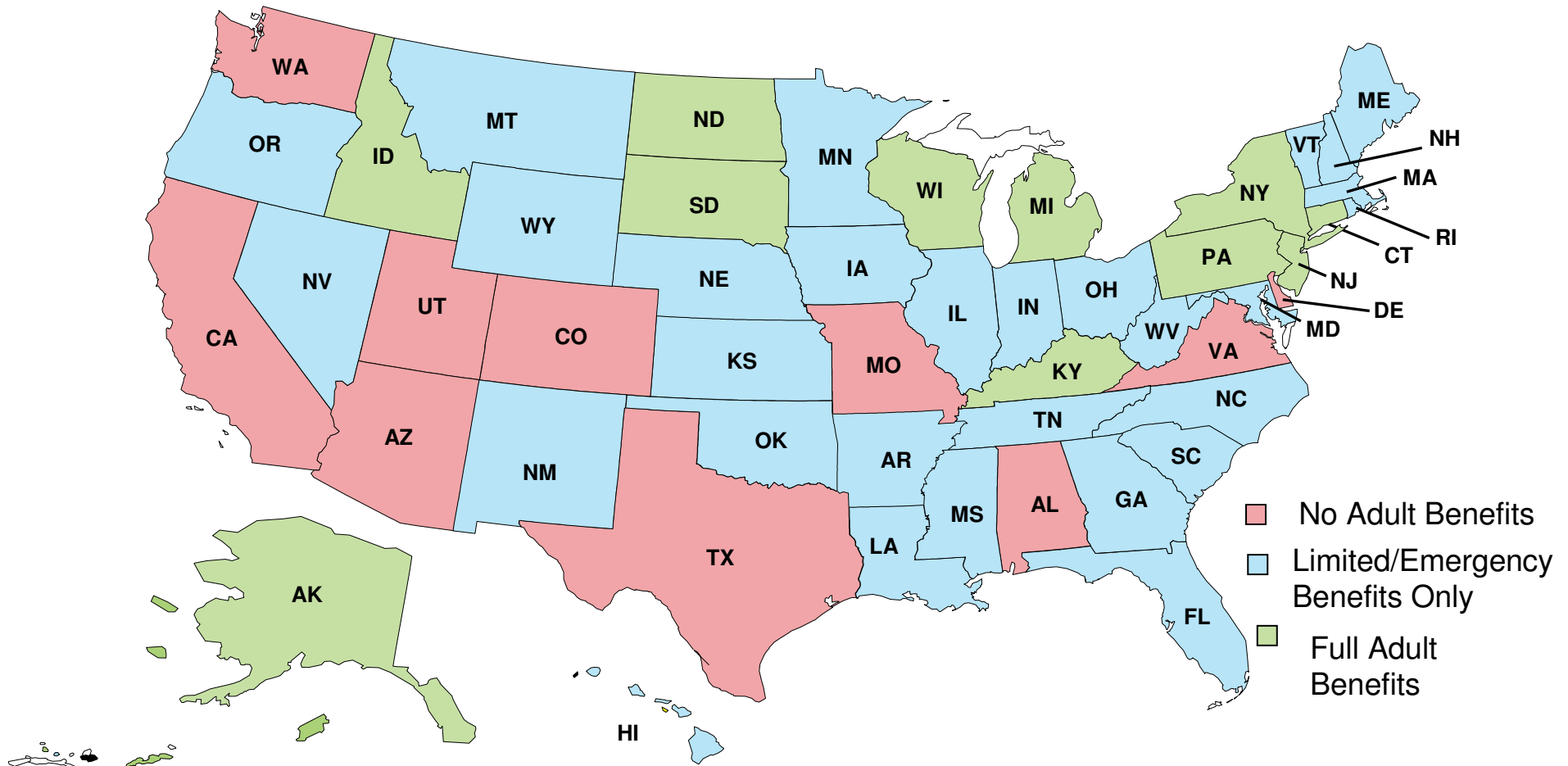


SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Health Interview Survey.

- As of 2009, an estimated 130 million U.S. adults and children lack dental coverage
- Approximately 70% of adults 65 and older lack any kind of dental coverage

Source: IOM report, 2011

Spotty adult Medicaid benefits



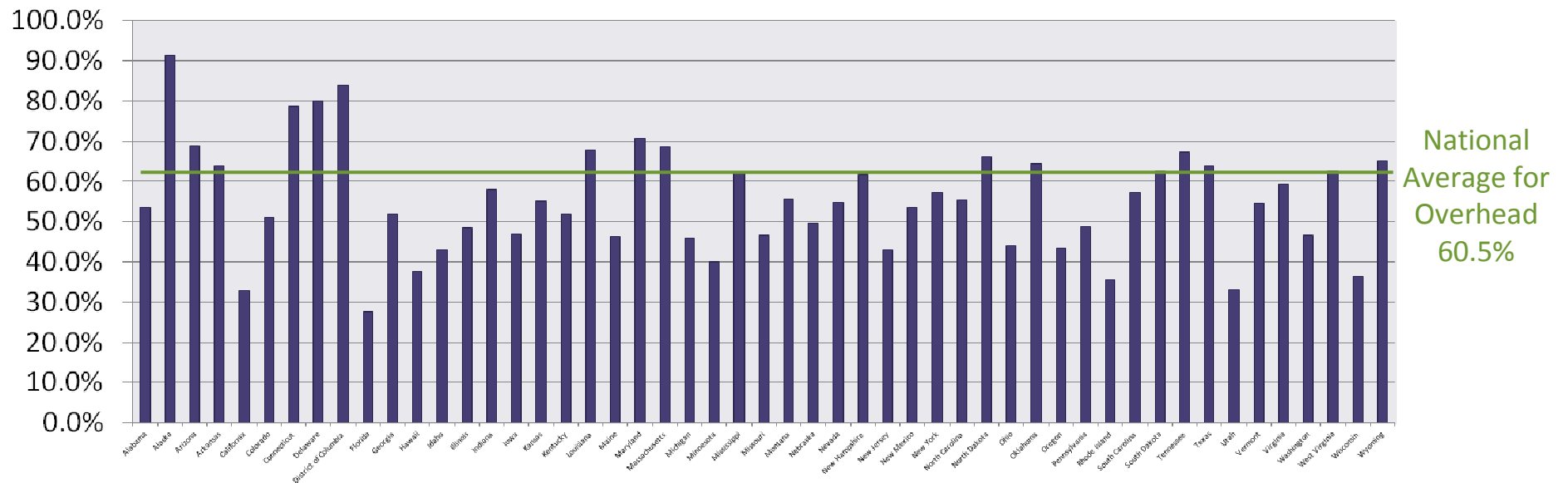
Source: American Dental Association. Available at: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2011/11/how-have-medicaid-dental-benefits-changed-in-your-state-1.html>

States pay too little: Medicaid Rates for Dental



- Most states pay less than it costs to provide dental care

States Medicaid Rates as a Percentage of dentists median retail fee, 2010



If most dentists won't accept Medicaid, then what??



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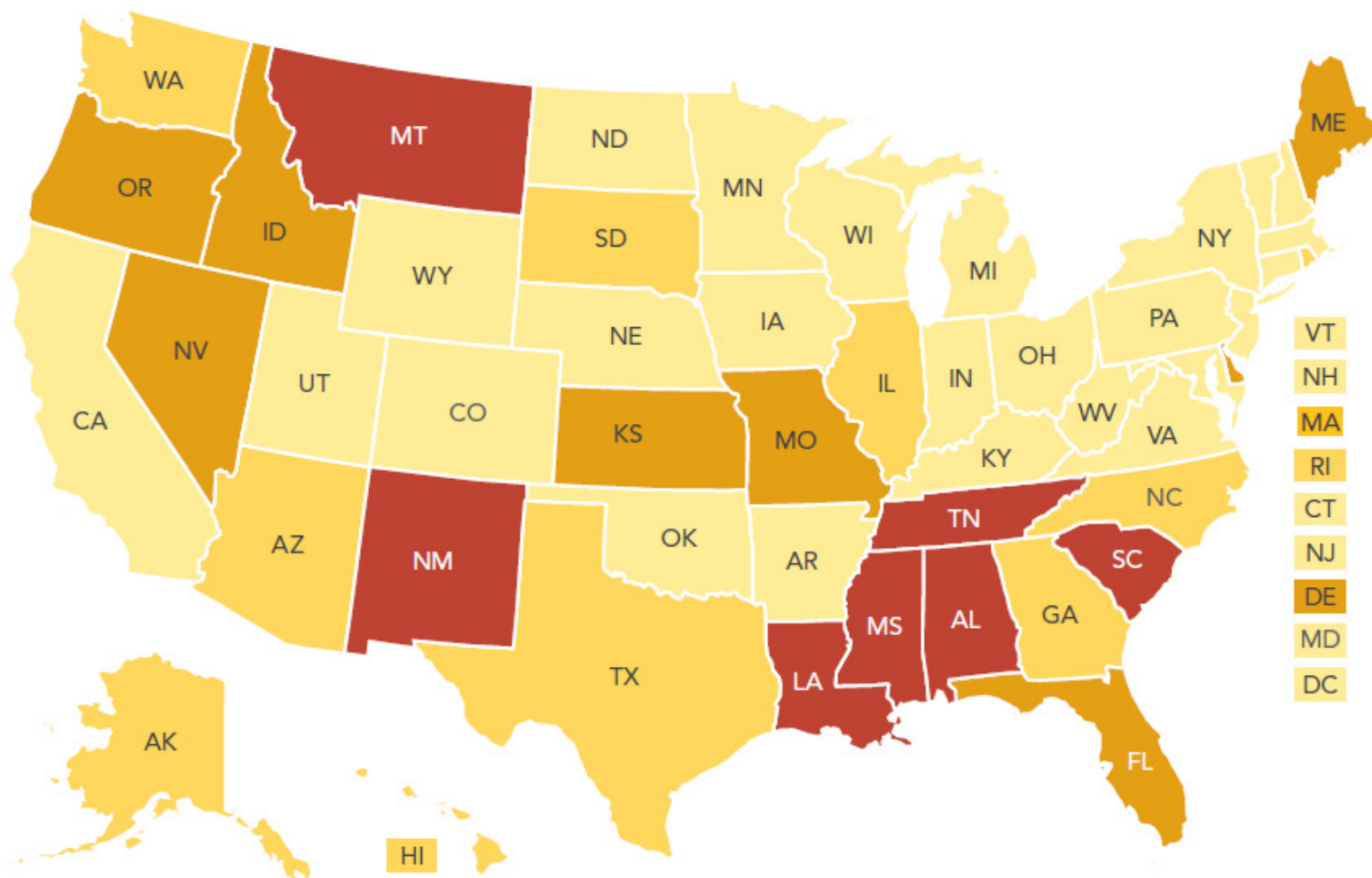
**“Dentists don’t want
to care for poor
people but they
don’t want us to
either”**

- Health Center official

Huge shortage of dentists 6,600+ are needed to lessen shortages



less severe Less than 10% 10-14.9% 15-19.9% 20% or more more severe



Source: Designated Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) Statistics. Available at:
http://ersrs.hrsa.gov/ReportServer?HGdw_Reports/BCD_HPSA/BCD_HPSA_SCR50_Smry&rs:Format=HTML3.2. Accessed January 6, 2011..

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A system that serves only 2/3 of the people



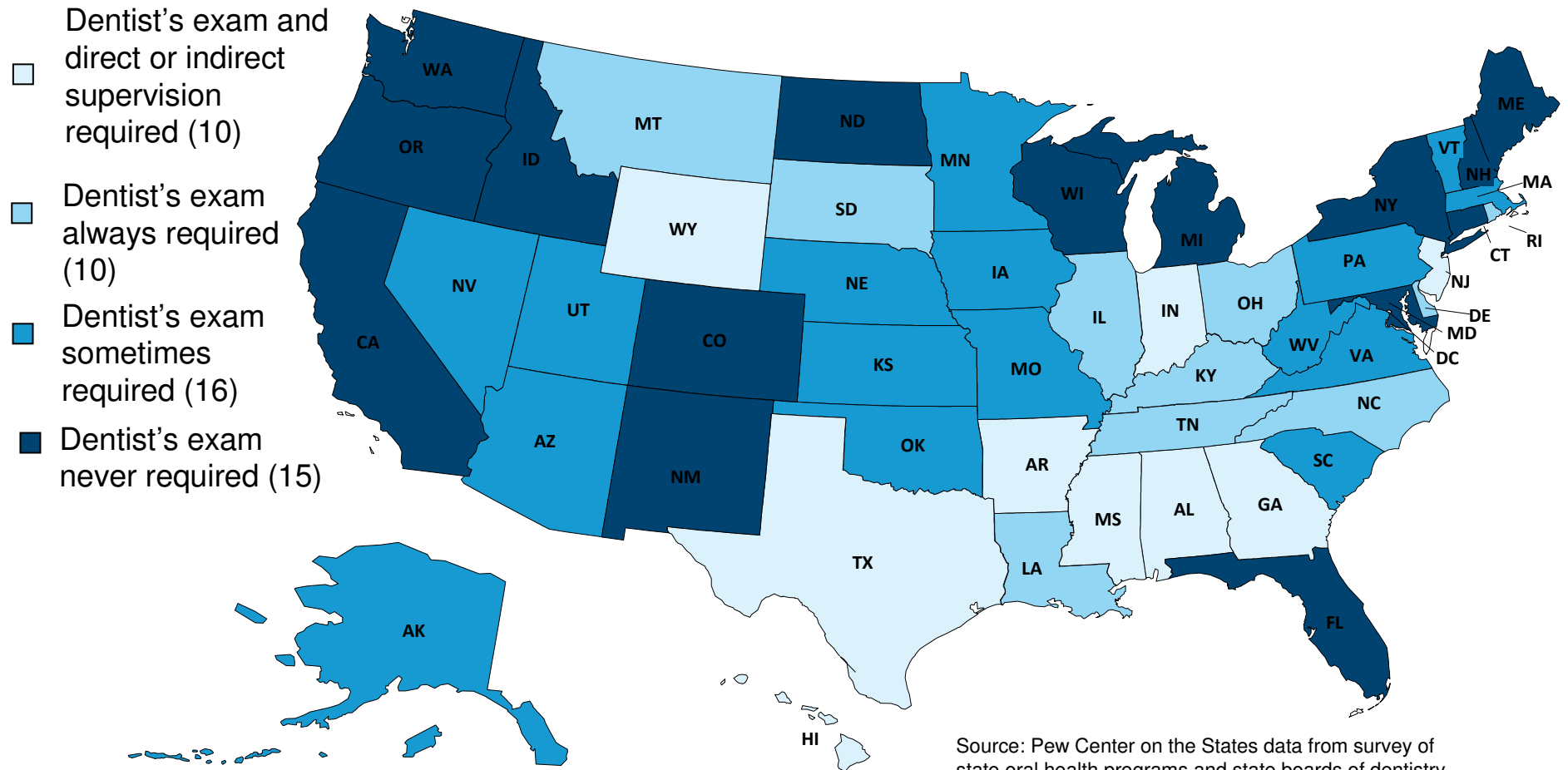
“If you live in the suburbs, if you have a car, plenty of money, dental insurance, and no dental disease, we have the perfect delivery system for you.”

- Charles Bertolami
Dean, New York University
College of Dentistry

What can we do about it?

Remove barriers to sealants

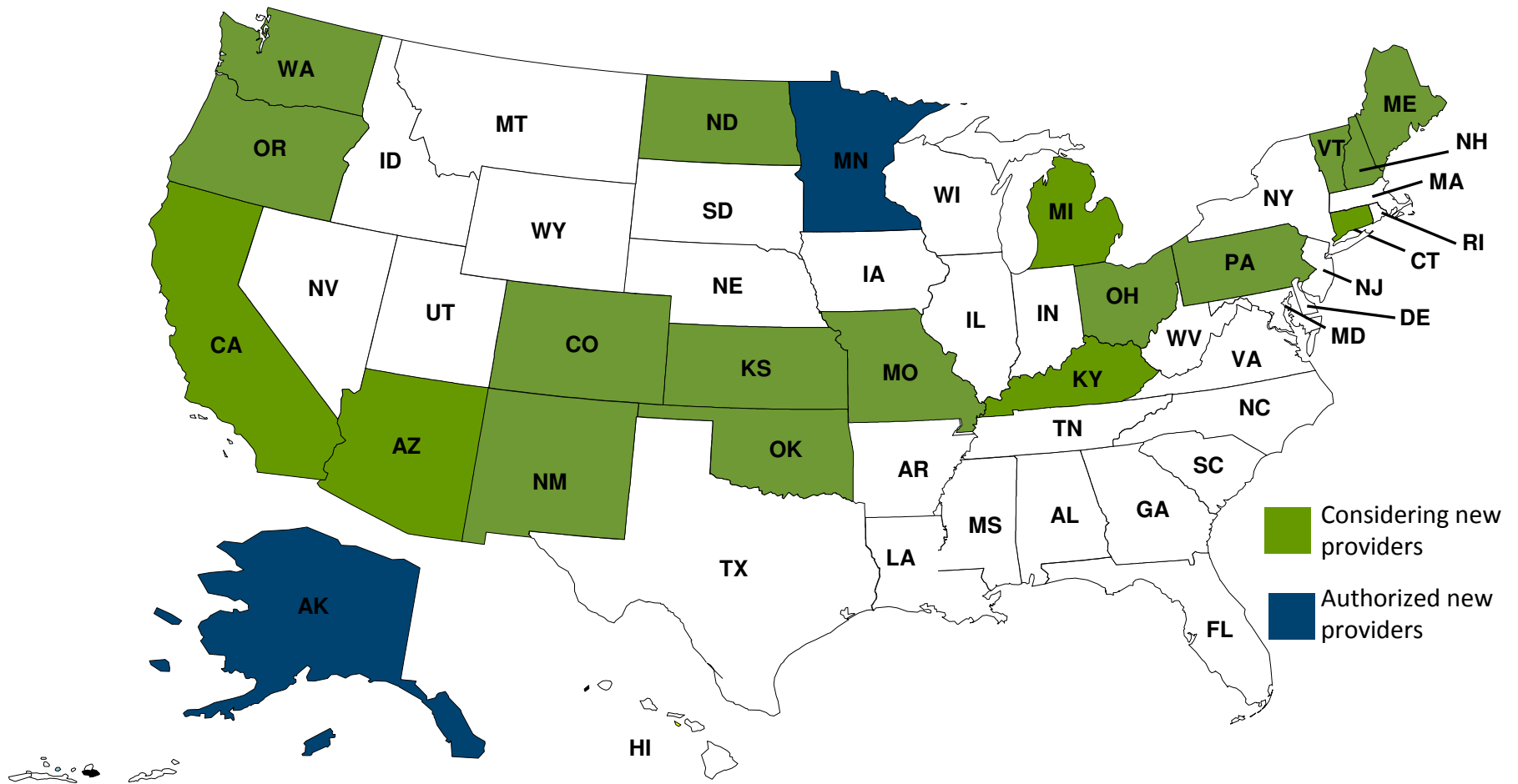
Prior Exam Requirements (2012)



Source: Pew Center on the States data from survey of state oral health programs and state boards of dentistry, 2011-2012.

Expand the dental workforce

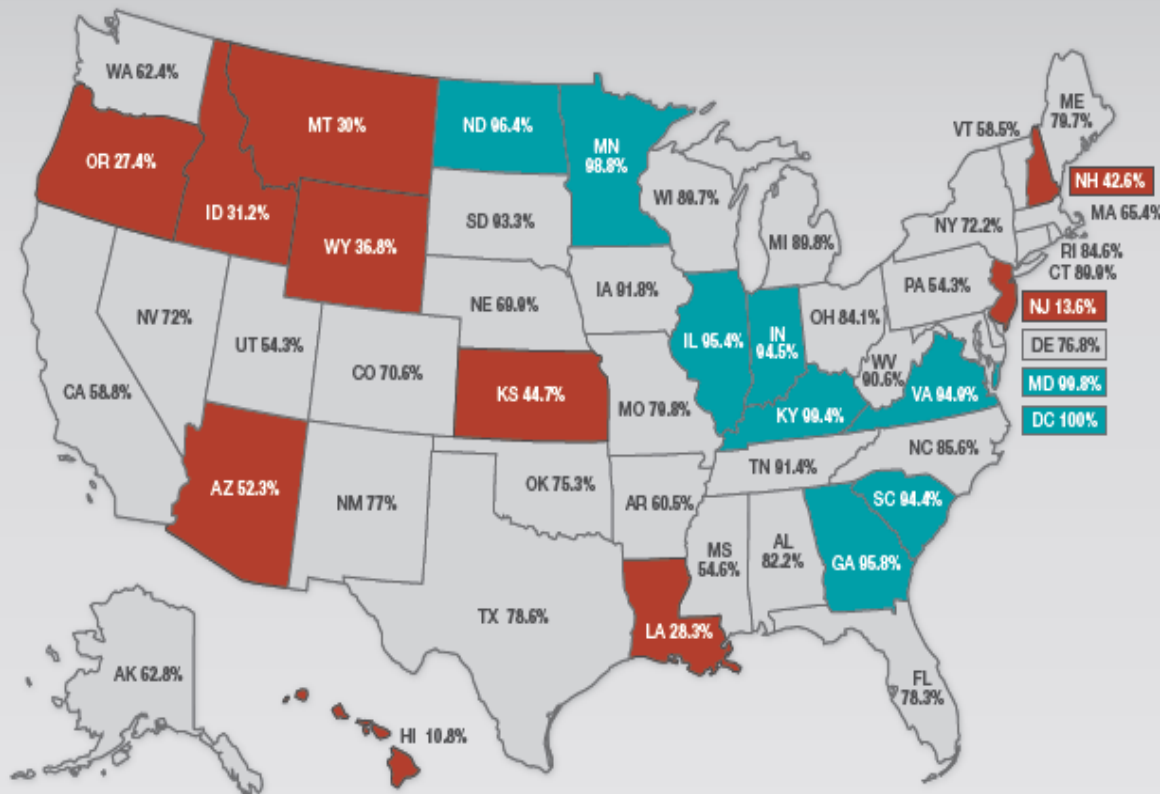
States that are exploring new ways to expand the dental workforce



Community water fluoridation: The top 10 and bottom 10

74 million

Americans who are on public water systems lack access to fluoridated drinking water



Percentage of residents on public water systems who are receiving fluoridated water in each state¹

- Top 10 states with highest percentage of fluoridation
- Bottom 10 states with lowest percentage of fluoridation

The CDC has recognized **water fluoridation** as one of “10 great public health achievements of the 20th century.”²

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “2005 Water Fluoridation Statistics”. Data covers only residents whose homes are connected to public water systems.
² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Ten Great Public Health Achievements—United States, 1900–1999”, <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/mmwrhtml/00059798.htm>

Raise rates, expand Medicaid coverage



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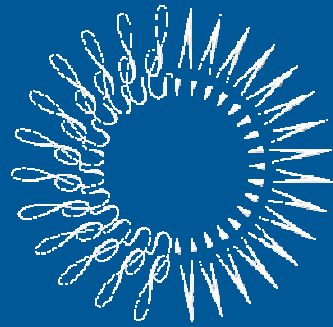
- State economies are turning around. Be next in line!



The need for solutions is great



Free clinic in Brighton, CO in 2011.



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Dental News & Views.

Send an email to mjacob@pewtrusts.org
with the words "I want DNV"
in the subject line.