disabilityscoop

Effort Seeks To Improve Dental Care For Those With IDD

by Shaun Heasley | September 25, 2026

With $51 million, a new initiative is underway to increase access to dental care for children with developmental disabilities in communities across the country.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said this week that its Health Resources and Services Administration is awarding funds to 28 health centers to help meet the specific dental needs of those with autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and intellectual disabilities.

Families of children with developmental disabilities have long reported struggles accessing dental care, with many providers ill-equipped to support sensory sensitivities, physical and communication differences and other specialized needs.

Federal officials say that participating health centers will use evidenced-based models and test new approaches. Funding will go toward expanding preventive care services, boosting the workforce and developing innovative models.

“A parent shouldn’t have to struggle to find a dental provider who is prepared to care for their child,” said Tom Engels, administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration. “This investment will help health centers build the skills, services and approaches needed to make dental care more accessible and responsive to children and families — and help us learn what works so successful models can reach more communities.”

In addition to challenges finding dental care, HHS noted that children with developmental disabilities are at increased risk of oral health problems like tooth decay and gum disease.

Health centers funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration are well-equipped to address the unique needs of those with disabilities since they also provide primary care and know how to connect families with resources like transportation and education, HHS said. Services at the centers are provided no matter a family’s ability to pay.

Participating health centers will receive up to $2 million each. In addition to funding, they will partake in “collaborative learning and evaluation activities,” federal officials said, that will help identify approaches that can be replicated by other providers.

Read more stories like this one. Sign up for Disability Scoop's free email newsletter to get the latest developmental disability news sent straight to your inbox.

© 2026 Disability Scoop, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

View this article online at https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2026/09/25/effort-seeks-to-improve-dental-care-for-those-with-idd/32189/

×
This is your last free article this month.

Get unlimited Disability Scoop access starting at just $5

JOIN TODAY
Logged in as Céline Fortin

protected by reCAPTCHA