

# Making Oral Health A Priority for Older Adults in Allegany County

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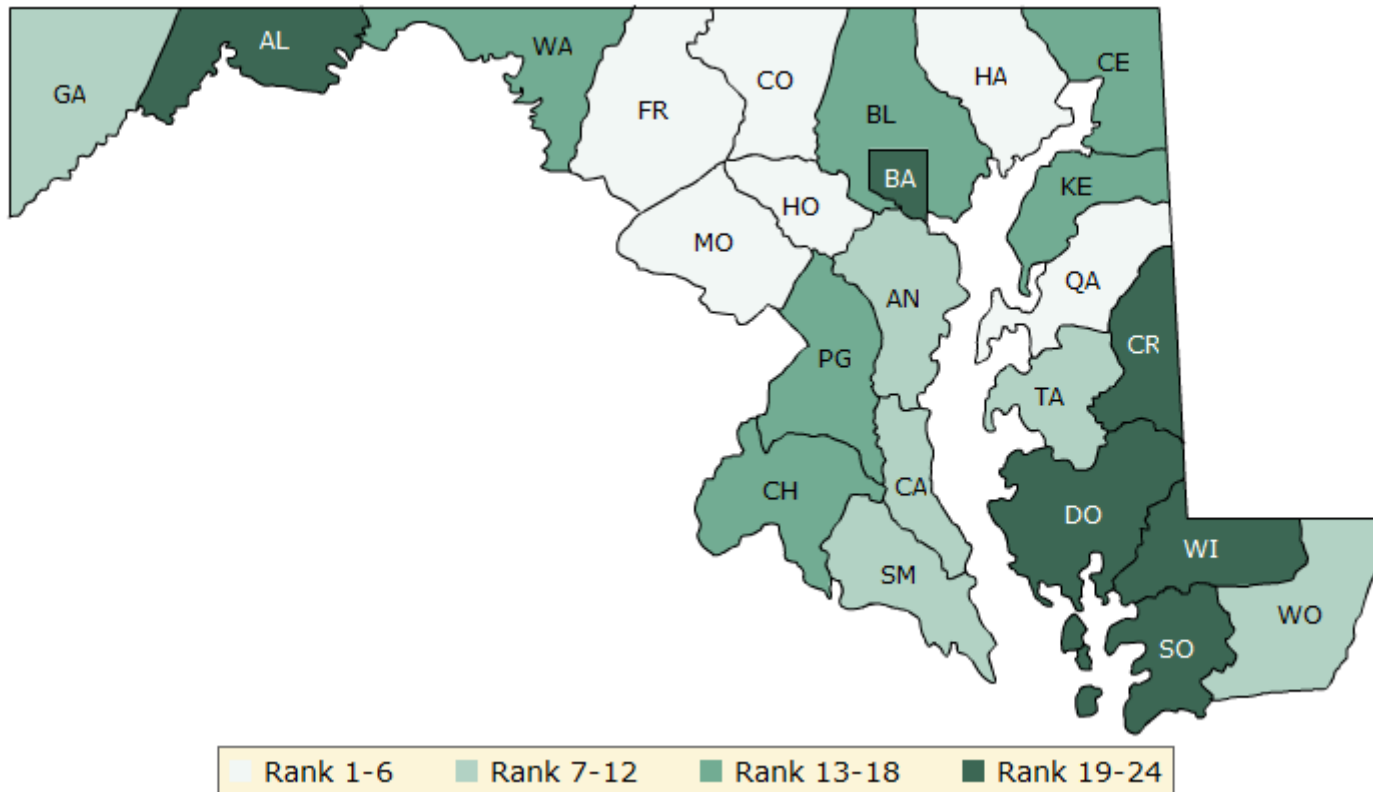
Dental Staff Hygienist

Allegany County Health Department

# Unique Needs of Allegany County

- Cumberland, MD is the “poorest town in Maryland,” according to a recent MSN Money report. The report continues “about 1 in 4 residents live in poverty, more than double the 10% statewide poverty rate. 28% of residents receive food stamps, well more than double the statewide 10.9% reciprocity rate”
- The median household income of \$30,275 is far less than half the state median household income of \$74,551

# 2016 Maryland County Health Rankings (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)



# Journal of Health Affairs 2016

- In this study about dental costs and Medicare beneficiaries, Dr. Amber Willink, at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, MD pointed out that a dental benefit could significantly lower the costs of several chronic diseases linked to poor oral health, such as diabetes and pneumonia.
- “What people who have researched this area have known for a long time is that our oral health is very much a part of our physical health” says Willink.

If you think your hands are full in Allegany County, you should see our *hearts*!



# Collaboration with Allegany Health Right for Dental Care Access

- Allegany Health Right identifies and qualifies patients who have dental needs with no access to dental care
- Patients are referred for one dental visit annually to address most urgent needs
- Patients may seek another visit annually and if still qualified are referred to care
- ACHD Dental provides as much care as we can in one hour

# Complete Dentures in Collaboration with Mountain Health Alliance

- Allegany County residents that have been edentulous for minimum of 5 years are made long-term temporary complete dentures
- Focus is on ability to participate in society

# ED Diversion Program Collaboration with WMHS

- Patients reporting to Western Maryland Health System ED with chief complaint dental
- Patients in immediate dental need are seen and treated in less than 48 hours
- Promotes responsible antibiotic stewardship
- Prevents initiation of opioid prescription
- Provided actual definitive care needed
- Funding support from Maryland Community Health Resources Commission grant



# HRDC Senior Center Dental Care Days

- HRDC provides van transport to dental clinic from four local senior centers
- Interested seniors self-identify dental needs
- Groups of 10 seniors are hosted and treated
- Primarily dental prophylaxis, dental education, restorative care limited to fillings, extractions, denture adjustments

# Lessons Learned

- The need is greater than anticipated
- Complete exams are completed on all patients entering clinic, it is rare that all dental care needs can be met
- Silver diamine fluoride great option to have available for caries control

# Challenges Faced

- Lack of providers available to provide for complex extensive care needs
- Limited to four dental operatories for care delivery
- Patients have strong desire to finish treatment plans, but resources available require triaging
- Facility hours limited to daylight weekdays
- Difficult to coordinate senior centers around transport needs

# Successes

- MCHRC Urgent Care grant started May 1, already 49 patients treated in first 15 days
- Denture Grant started January 2017, 5 complete denture sets delivered, first recipient returned to workforce 5 weeks later

# Next Steps

- Funding, funding, funding
- Will there be a Medicare dental benefit?
- Providers needed