

Healthy Teeth and Gums

Healthy teeth and gums are essential to [overall health](#). But in some rural parts of the state where Missourians face significant challenges, like lack of providers and transportation, seeing a dentist is difficult. That's why [Missouri Coalition for Oral Health](#) (MCOH) is looking for ways to bring teledentistry services to residents in Shelby, Lincoln, and Monroe Counties, as well as surrounding areas.

This emerging technology is an affordable solution that eliminates the need to travel long distances and provides the same quality of care to patients as in-office visits. With teledentistry, a hygienist provides routine services typically performed in a dental office using mobile equipment at a community location, bringing care closer to where people live. The hygienist also takes pictures and x-rays, which are reviewed by the supervising dentist in a remote location. If treatment is needed, a subsequent appointment is scheduled, which can be at a dental office or a mobile dental van. This new method of service delivery makes accessing preventive dental care easier and reduces the need for dental treatment, saving time and money.



Although a viable option that can help ensure dental care needs are met, MCOH recognized implementation would take broad collaboration to transform the current dental care system to be more accessible. MCOH's multi-pronged approach, with efforts focused on education, training, advocacy, and coalition-building, aims to foster widespread adoption.

As part of its community engagement efforts, MCOH is working with residents to assess needs and barriers, educate on the benefits of teledentistry, and identify the best ways to implement teledentistry services in each community. MCOH is also developing a large network of advocates who can help identify needed changes and build support for public policies that will make it easier for communities to use this innovative approach.

Understanding hesitancy around this unfamiliar practice, MCOH is working with partners to provide guidance to dentists on a range of topics, including teledentistry technologies, reimbursement mechanisms, and practice guidelines. By working with patients, providers, and policymakers, MCOH is ensuring everyone can get the care they need when and where it's most convenient for them.