

# Oral Health and Access for People with Disabilities

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# Disability is part of health equity.

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-designates-people-disabilities-population-health-disparities>

## NEWS RELEASES

Tuesday, September 26, 2023

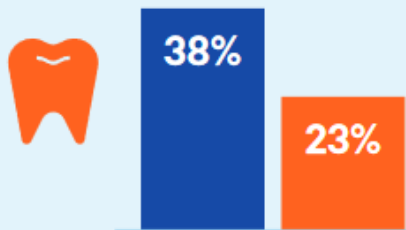
### NIH designates people with disabilities as a population with health disparities

*Designation, new research program and update to NIH mission are actions to ensure inclusion of people with disabilities.*

# Health Impact Data: Oral Health and Disability

A greater proportion

of individuals in households experiencing disability (38%) rate their oral health as fair or poor compared with those not in households experiencing disability (23%).



Individuals with a disability have higher prevalence and severity of oral disease in comparison with the general population.

<https://www.carequest.org/resource-library/family-affair-snapshot-oral-health-disparities-and-challenges-individuals>

## Oral Health is a window to your overall health.

Poor oral health can be linked to:

- Heart conditions and cardiovascular disease
- Pregnancy and birth complications
- Respiratory diseases
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Alzheimer's disease
- Rheumatoid arthritis

# Barrier 1: Provider Trainer Gaps in Disability Care

## Physician Attitudes:

- Over 80% of U.S. physicians believe people with disabilities have a worse quality of life than non-disabled individuals. This may contribute to healthcare disparities.

## Dental Provider Gaps:

- The American Dental Association only updated its ethics code in 2018 to prohibit the denial of care for patients with disabilities.
- Limited number of dental schools provide specialized training for disability care.
- Lack of equipment

Source: Harvard Gazette; Decisions in Dentistry

## Barrier 2: Insurance and Coverage Gaps for PWD

### **Medicaid and Medicare Issues:**

- Medicaid coverage for oral health care is inconsistent across states, and many adults with disabilities lose coverage upon reaching adulthood.
- As of 2018:
  - 3 states provided no dental benefits to adults on Medicaid.
  - 12 states offered only emergency dental care.
  - 17 states have limited coverage with annual caps.
  - 19 states (including D.C.) provide more comprehensive coverage.

Source: Families USA, Oral Health and People with Disabilities Brief

# Advancing Oral Health Access



**Training and Education**



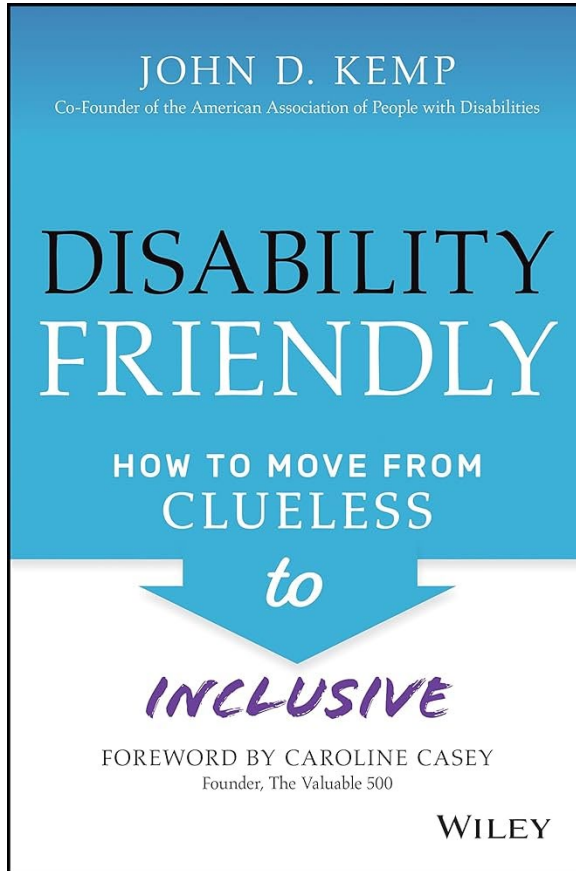
**Incentives**



**Reimbursement Improvements**



**Advocacy and Policy Change**



**We need each other!**

Thank you!

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