

Rlte Smiles: Right Choice?

Addressing Oral Health Inequality in Rhode Island Policy Formulation, Implementation and Impact

A Dissertation Proposal presented to the Faculty of the Heller School for Social Policy and Management

Brandeis University, Waltham, MA

By

Yara A. Halasa, DDS, MS, MA

To address oral health inequality, Rhode Island delegated contracting and reimbursing Medicaid oral health providers to a private insurance entity. This dissertation aims to evaluate Rhode Island's oral health initiative, called Rlte Smiles. This dissertation employs a mixed-method design to (1) analyzing the formulation and implementation of the state's decision to contract out Medicaid dental services, (2) assessing the ability of this initiative to actively engage private dentists in serving Medicaid beneficiaries, and (3) measuring the impact of this program on utilization of dental services.

A quantitative study will investigate the State's decision to contract out dental services. Using agency and stewardship theories, I will examine the quality of the contract management and its impact on the ability of Rlte Smiles program to reach the intended goals set by the state's legislators.

To assess Rlte Smiles' ability to increase the active participation of dental providers in the program, I will conduct a survey for active general private dentists practicing in RI. Using probability by proportionate sample and conjoint analysis, I will derive the relative importance of each component of Rlte Smiles program and generate market simulations to predict the optimal dental insurance program from the providers' perspective.

To measure the impact of Rlte Smiles on utilization of preventive and curative dental services, I will use interrupted time-series analysis utilizing aggregate data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services CMS-416 Annual Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment states' report.

This research will fill the gap in the current literature by analyzing the policy formulation, implementation and impact of states' Medicaid oral initiatives. Additionally, this research will provide a better understanding of the characteristics of a public dental insurance program that encourages oral providers to actively provide dental services to Medicaid patients. While each state has its own dental program rules and procedures, the Rhode Island case study will help other states' Medicaid dental programs in weighing the cost and benefits associated with contracting the dental program and conditions needed for its success.

Dissertation Committee Members: Jeffery Prottas, PhD, Chair
Donald Shepard, PhD (The Heller School)
Dominic Hodgkin, PhD (The Heller School)
Mary Foley, MPH (Executive director of Medicaid-CHIP
State Dental Association)

Proposal Hearing: Wednesday April 15th, 2015: 12:30pm-2:30PM
Room Heller 147