

<u>Location:</u>	City Hall, Boston
<u>Time and Date:</u>	10am to 11:30am, Friday, September 11, 2009
<u>Coalition Members Present:</u>	Gerry Thomas (lead), Raul Garcia; Michelle Henshaw; Jane Willen; Kathleen Atkinson; Courtney Chelo
<u>Community Attendees:</u>	Members of the Boston Mayor's Senior Advisory Committee (50 to 60 in total), all seniors residing in or around Boston: <10 with employee/group dental insurance, 2 or 3 with MassHealth; the rest (a large majority) were self-pay.

Issues Discussed

- Accessing dental care for seniors
 - Why is there no dental coverage from Medicare?
 - Paying for dental services is costly: many of the participants were self-pay patients and did not know where or how to check for eligibility and how to enroll for government-run dental coverage or affordable private individual/family plans.
 - Dental visits typically dredge up new oral health issues, leading to a bill that is often higher than anticipated.
 - Seeking and receiving care in dental schools is slow and requires many visits.
 - Transportation to and from dental appointments can be a real problem – cost, convenience, and safety issues.
 - Most reported not using the community health center dental services because the wait list is often months long.
- Questions on MassHealth eligibility and what it covers.
- Most important oral health issue: many reported problems with ill-fitting dentures leading to inability to speak and eat normally.

What is Working?

- Oral health screening programs in the City of Boston.

Suggested Solutions

- Medicare should cover dental services.
- Dental schools and private dentists should offer low-cost, discounted care to seniors, in lieu of local property taxes for dental schools and as donated time for private dentists.
- There should be special clinics for seniors with denture problems.
- Patients should be told up front what the treatment options and associated costs are.
- Dentists should be donating more time to providing discounted services to seniors (more private sector support for dental care).
- Seniors need to know more about how to register for federal or private dental insurance.