

## Providing Comprehensive Dental Coverage to Pregnant Women in Medicaid and FAMIS

### Improving Access to Oral Health Care

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#### Importance to Virginians

Good oral health is especially crucial during pregnancy. Virginia covers pregnant women in the Medicaid and FAMIS MOMS programs; however, the health needs of these women and their babies are not entirely addressed. Comprehensive dental services are not covered for pregnant women in the existing benefit package. Virginia mothers and their babies are at risk for significant health problems including preterm birth.

#### Goal

By providing a new dental benefit to women enrolled in Medicaid and FAMIS MOMS, Virginia will reduce the number of preterm births, cut down on emergency dental expenditures, decrease the state's cost of dental care for children, and improve the lives of these babies.

#### Issue Background

Currently, Virginia has 45,000 pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid and FAMIS MOMS. Without access to comprehensive dental care, these women risk having dental health issues go undiagnosed and untreated, needlessly putting their unborn babies in jeopardy. A pregnant woman's oral health is linked to her delivery, her baby's health, and even the costs to Virginia's Medicaid and FAMIS programs.

Pregnant women with periodontal disease may be up to eight times more likely to deliver prematurely. In fact, data has shown that 18 percent of all preterm births may be attributable to periodontal disease. Premature birth can cause a host of health problems for both mother and baby. It can also be the source of significant cost to the Commonwealth, as the costs in the first year of life for a preterm baby are more than 10 times that of a baby born at full term. According to the March of Dimes, an average preterm birth costs \$50,000 in the first year of life.

The results of a lack of dental care for pregnant women extend beyond early delivery. Mothers can spread oral bacteria to their babies, putting those infants at risk of developing tooth decay themselves.

# A Healthy Virginia

## **Strategy for Success**

DMAS will implement comprehensive dental coverage for pregnant women in Medicaid and FAMIS MOMS.

## **Timeline**

Virginia will begin covering comprehensive dental benefits to pregnant women in March 2015.

## **Measures of Achievement**

Virginia will monitor the number of pregnant women who receive dental services under this new benefit.

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