

Medical-Dental Integration at Federally Qualified Health Centers: Facilitators and Barriers

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Objectives:

To evaluate the status of Medical-Dental Integration (MDI) at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) by identifying barriers and facilitators to implementation.

Methods:

An online survey was distributed in November 2023 to medical and dental leadership at FQHCs via the National Network of Oral Health Access listserv. Respondents selected the top three barriers and facilitators to MDI implementation. Descriptive and bivariate analyses were conducted to compare perceptions between medical and dental clinics regarding factors that enhance or hinder MDI implementation.

Results & Conclusion:

There were a total of 31 medical and 180 dental respondents. All medical and 95% of dental respondents reported some form of MDI at their FQHCs. The three most common facilitators were executive leadership support (52% medical and 63% dental respondents), clinical staff willingness to perform MDI services (34% and 44%), and proximity between medical and dental clinics (32% and 30%). The most common barriers were inadequate financial incentives for MDI (22% and 26%), referral process challenges (24% and 19%), and limited time for MDI services during patient visits (22% and 19%). No significant differences were found between medical and dental clinics regarding these factors.

Over half of the medical and dental respondents cited leadership support as a top MDI facilitator. The lack of significant differences in barriers and facilitators suggests these issues universally impact MDI implementation.

Future research should explore best practices to overcome challenges and strengthen MDI services at FQHCs.