Although Daniel has AHCCCS, he had not been to the dentist in a few years because his plan only covers dental emergencies. He did have a cavity that was bothering him, but he didn’t think it qualified as an emergency. Instead, he took care to avoid foods that were hard to chew, and used over-the-counter pain medications when it really stung. Besides, he could barely find the time to take his kids to the dentist, even though they did have dental coverage.

So, when Daniel’s tooth broke and the resulting infection began to cause him even more pain, he had no choice but to go to the emergency room. There, he was given antibiotics, a strong recommendation to see a dentist, and a pat on his back out the door. Great advice, but it was hard to find somewhere to go.

His extraction was covered, but the gap in his smile does nothing for his confidence. Daniel often catches himself in the mirror, his eyes drooping lower than the corners of his mouth. He wishes he could have found a solution sooner—if there even was one to find.

**But what if Daniel was covered by comprehensive dental insurance?**

Now his whole family is covered, Daniel feels comfortable scheduling appointments to visit the dentist together. He’s glad he has an appointment on the books; his cavity just started bothering him.

The dentist recommends a filling and a deep cleaning for Daniel, while his children get sealants to prevent painful cavities like their dad’s. The next time they all come in, Daniel’s tooth is as good as new, preventing an expensive dental emergency down the line. The hygienist even helpfully informs him that keeping his gums healthy can improve his diabetes.

Daniel’s family celebrates the successful trip to the dentist by going out to eat—though he thinks he’ll enjoy a salad today.
Arizonans need a fiscally responsible investment in comprehensive dental coverage.

Arizona should invest in oral health care for adult Medicaid members because comprehensive dental care can:
- eliminate excruciating and unnecessary mouth pain
- prevent expensive dental emergencies
- improve people's ability to eat nutritious foods
- help to control costly chronic diseases
- empower adults to get and keep jobs
- improve overall health and mental health!

**By the Numbers**

- **$2 per person**
  - per month cost to Arizona for comprehensive dental coverage. States with comprehensive coverage on average have lower per person dental expenditures.

- **$21 million**
  - costs savings in medical care per year. Due to the connection between oral and overall health, dental care improves medical outcomes for patients with health conditions. $2,840 saving per diabetes patient $1,090 saving per heart disease patient $2,400 saving per pregnant patient

- **$16 million**
  - cost savings due to increased participation in the workforce over the next decade. Employers are less likely to hire people with missing teeth, and employees with dental problems will miss work days or be less productive.

- **79%**
  - of ER dental visits could be diverted to a dental office. People who visit ERs for dental problems receive pain medication and antibiotics, but not effective dental care. This is costly and ineffective.

**Sources**
- "Making the Case for Dental Coverage for Adults in All State Medicaid Programs" - American Dental Association, July 2021
- "Fiscal & Economic Impacts of Adult Preventative Dental Medicaid Benefit" - Grand Canyon Institute, October 2023