



## NEWS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

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### **Delta Dental Plans Association Consumer Survey Reveals Sixty Percent have Dental Benefits**

**OAK BROOK, IL (January 7, 2008)** – Nearly 89 percent of consumers receive regular dental care, with the majority seeing their dentist twice a year or more. Sixty percent have dental benefits, while the other 29 percent pay out of pocket for the care they need. This leaves six million at-risk consumers who defer the dental care they need.

These findings are revealed in a recent survey of consumers age 25 and older by The Long Group for the not-for-profit Delta Dental Plans Association.<sup>1</sup>

“It’s very positive that 89 percent of consumers say they are receiving dental care,” says Max Anderson, DDS, a national oral health advisor for Delta Dental Plans Association. “However, it is disconcerting that there are still six million who say they defer the dental care they need.”

The study reveals that the at-risk dental population is comprised of one in nine consumers (11 percent) without dental benefits or dental care of which nearly six million required but deferred dental care within the past 12 months.

The demographic profile of the uninsured dental consumer who is deferring care and is at-risk maintains an annual household income of less than \$35,000, possesses a high school education or less, and is either older than 65 and retired, or between the ages of 25 and 34 and unemployed.

Of the consumers (60 percent) with dental benefits, Delta Dental is the established leader and most (82 percent) acquired dental coverage from their employer-sponsored plan.

Among consumers who acquired their dental coverage from an employer-sponsored plan, nearly nine in ten (88 percent) of these businesses paid a portion of the dental benefits premium (financially contributed or subsidized) this dental coverage. The remainder of the employees (12 percent) voluntarily paid to acquire the dental coverage through their employer.

Dental care is more generously accessed by consumers covered by their employers' plan with 83 percent reporting they visit the dentist twice or more a year, as compared to 63 percent who pay out of pocket for their dental benefits or dental care.

Among other key survey findings were the following:

- Far more consumers who receive regular dental care say there is a “strong connection” between oral health and their overall health status, than those who are at-risk (50 percent).
- Consumers consider dental benefits to be a “very important” part of the essential benefits package, along with medical coverage, retirement benefits and prescription drug coverage.
- Consumers want their dental benefits to be easy to use, allow them to use their personal dentist, and include several coverage options of which the most important is preventive care such as cleanings and X-rays.
- Dental benefits ownership reaches an apex among consumers between the ages of 35 to 44 (73 percent) and 45 to 54 (66 percent) with families.
- Among the employed, insured, over 50-years-old, pre-retirement segment, one half are offered dental benefits in retirement by their employers, with one in five employers funding all or a portion of the benefits. Among those employed by firms that do not offer dental benefits to retirees, one in four pre-retirees expects to purchase dental benefits in retirement.

The not-for-profit Delta Dental Plans Association ([www.deltadental.com](http://www.deltadental.com)) based in Oak Brook, Ill., is the leading national network of independent dental service corporations specializing in providing dental benefits programs to 51 million Americans in more than 93,000 employee groups throughout the country.

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<sup>1</sup>The Long Group conducted random, 16-minute telephone interviews with individuals age 25 and older. A sampling frame of 900 completed consumer surveys was utilized. The sample was drawn nationally to profile the distribution of population in each state. Among consumers, the sample was weighted to profile the age distribution of consumers within the nation. With 900 completed interviews, the confidence interval for the sample gathered ranges from 2.0 percent to 3.3 percent at the 95 percent level of confidence.