



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



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*Kathy Jönzzon, Director HIPAA Product Service and Support,  
Chair of the WEDI Dental Workgroup and active member of the Workgroup Leadership Committee provided  
the following responses for this WEDI Member Spotlight:*

**Please share some history about your organization. How did it begin?**

Delta Dental believes that all Americans deserve access to oral health care. In an increasingly complex insurance landscape, that simple concept drives our work every day, just as it has for the last 60 years.

The roots of Delta Dental go back to 1954, beginning on the foundation of improving oral health by establishing access to dental benefits. We helped shape dental benefits and oral health care in the nation as we worked to provide employers, individuals and families with the dental benefits they needed.

With the increased focus on oral health care and the marketplace need for dental benefits, Delta Dental expanded its operations. Comprised today of 39 member companies, Delta Dental provides dental benefits to more than 73 million Americans.

Today, 4 out of 5 dentists in the nation are part of the Delta Dental network, helping us to establish fair contracted rates that save consumers money.

**What is your primary solution/service/product?**

Roughly 98% of Americans with dental benefits, obtain them through a separately-contracted plan, also known as a standalone plan, mostly offered by an employer or group plan. Through our large dental networks, Delta Dental works to ensure that Americans have access to the dental benefits that are right for them.

We continue to work to help Americans have access to the dental benefits they want in the way that makes the most sense for them and their families.

## **How does your solution/service/product help improve the healthcare system?**

When someone has, understands and uses their dental benefits, they have better oral health, they miss less work due to dental issues, and, in general, live happier and healthier lives. Through our contracted dentists across the nation, the ability to negotiate better contracted rates delivering savings to consumers, and focus on oral health education, Delta Dental helps people have better smiles and better overall health and wellbeing.

## **Who are your customers?**

With a network of more than 152,000 dentists nationwide, Delta Dental serves more than 73 million Americans with dental coverage and provides dental coverage to more than 129,000 groups nationwide, including 41.5 percent of Fortune 1000 companies.

## **What differentiates your organization from others?**

Delta Dental works to increase access to oral health care by bringing dental services to communities and populations in need, partners with schools and promotes a better understanding to improve the nation's oral health, one person at a time. In 2015, Delta Dental member companies donated nearly \$70 million to communities across the nation to increase the understanding of crucial oral health issues and access to oral health.

**What major projects is your organization currently working on?** Delta Dental is working on a variety of organization level projects in the area of External Standards and Electronic Data Interchange. Among the most notable is the Universal Template project which leverages the capabilities of the X12, 005010, 270/271 Eligibility and Benefits Transactions and the National Dental EDI Council (NDEDIC) Top Dental Eligibility and Benefit Questions Response Guide. This project supports an NDEDIC collaborative effort bringing together dental providers, payers, clearinghouses and practice management vendors to address routine eligibility and benefit questions through electronic data interchange to decrease provider dependence on payer call center support. The Delta Dental System wide implementation enhances and standardizes the content and display of patient eligibility and benefit information on a national level.

**Why did you become a WEDI member?** As the "go-to" organization for the business implementation of healthcare initiatives, WEDI's focus on evaluating and interpreting the impact of federal mandates on the healthcare industry through the use and adoption of mandated/voluntary electronic processing solutions for providers, practice management systems, clearinghouses and payers, serves my company's interests and its stakeholders well.

As a regular attendee of WEDI conferences, educational webinars and actively participating in various presentations, in 2011 it became apparent to me that dental payer interests were being under-served/represented in the WEDI setting. Recognizing that the WEDI organization is primarily comprised of volunteers, I approached the WEDI leadership asking them to consider forming a WEDI Payer Dental Workgroup to focus on dental industry processing issues. Through that discussion, the WEDI leadership team not only agreed to form the WEDI Dental Workgroup, it further recommended that the Workgroup concept be

expanded to support all dental stakeholder interests, e.g., providers, payers, clearinghouses, practice management systems and payers.

**What do you find to be the most beneficial part of your membership?** The most beneficial part of the WEDI membership is direct access to all aspects of health care subject matter expertise. Attendance at the WEDI conferences keep you current with healthcare trends, mandated implementation requirements and provides access to subject matter experts and agency resources to assist the healthcare industry in moving forward with implementing and adopting required/voluntary enhancements, improvements and best practices. While the emphasis and focus is on the medical and hospital side of the industry, many of the lessons learned and the associated impacts of federal rules and regulations apply and have relevance to the dental industry. The ICD-10 Diagnosis Codes implementation process is probably the most illustrative example of how a federal mandate applies to medical as compared to dental. For the medical provider, hospital and payer side of the healthcare industry, there was a tremendous impact from both the financial and patient service delivery process. In general dentistry, the introduction of diagnosis coding was virtually nonexistent and not routinely required for patient treatment and payment processing. While the medical industry was working on backward/forward cross checking outcomes from ICD-9 codes to ICD-10 CM, dentistry and WEDI Dental Workgroup focus was on educating the provider and payer communities on the requirements of diagnosis codes, the benefits of using diagnosis codes and their applicability and value to streamlining dental payment processing.

**What are some emerging trends you see in the overall industry that your organization provides thought leadership on?** The most significant trends I see in the dental healthcare industry is the focus on oral health wellness programs for all age groups and applicable product offerings directed at the prevention of dental disease. Offering patients dental health risk assessment tools, incentivized dental health programs, comprehensive yet affordable benefit plans and providing “at-your-fingertips” consumer-based applications to engage the public at large in the importance of oral health and its direct relationship to the individual’s overall health and wellness is paramount.