

# The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Matter

## Tennessee



2011 GRADE

**Tennessee** meets half of the eight policy benchmarks aimed at addressing children's dental health needs. The state's Medicaid program continues to exceed the national benchmarks for payments to dentists and the percentage of Medicaid enrollees ages one to 18 receiving dental care.

Tennessee does not report data on dental health to the National Oral Health Surveillance System. Although the state did not reimburse primary care physicians for providing basic preventive services such as fluoride varnish in 2010, Tennessee was preparing to adopt this policy as the Pew report was being finalized.<sup>1</sup>

### HOW WELL IS TENNESSEE RESPONDING?

2011: **C**

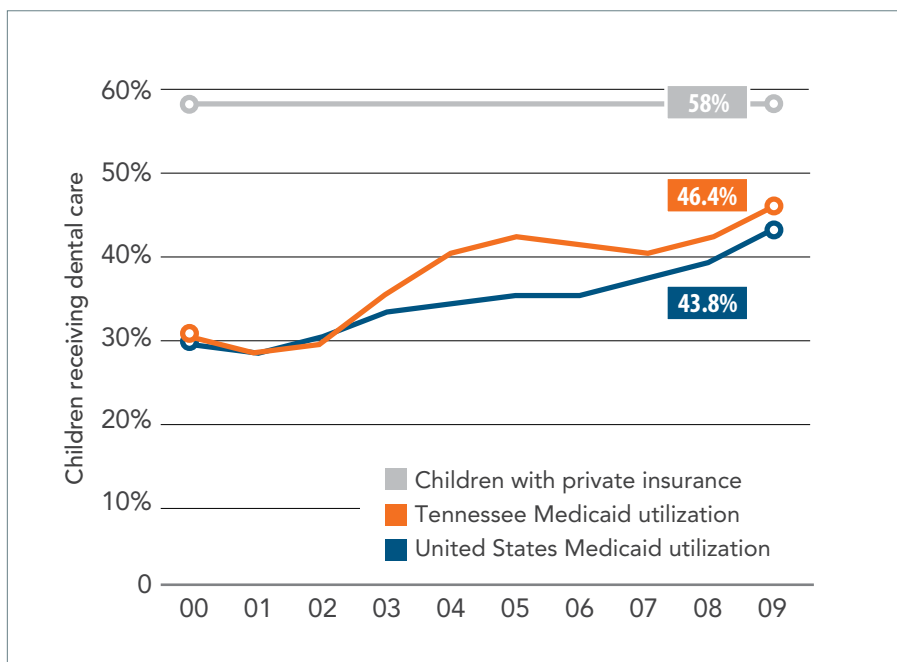
2010: **C**

DATA YEAR	MEASURED AGAINST THE NATIONAL BENCHMARKS FOR EIGHT POLICY APPROACHES	STATE	NATIONAL	MEETS OR EXCEEDS	MET OR EXCEEDED
2010	Share of high-risk schools with sealant programs	25-49%	25%	✓	✓
2010	Hygienists can place sealants without dentist's prior exam	NO	YES		
2008	Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies	91.4%	75%	✓	✓
2009	Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care	46.4%	38.1%	✓	✓
2010	Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid	67.3%	60.5%	✓	✓
2010	Pays medical providers for early preventive dental health care	NO	YES		
2010	Authorizes new primary care dental providers	NO	YES		
2010	Tracks data on children's dental health	NO	YES		
<b>Total score</b>				<b>4 of 8</b>	<b>4 of 8</b>

**Grading: A = 6-8 points   B = 5 points   C = 4 points   D = 3 points   F = 0-2 points**

## HOW BAD IS THE PROBLEM?

**Too many children lack access to dental care, with severe outcomes.** One measure of the problem: more than half of the children on Medicaid received no dental service in 2009.



SOURCE: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS-416.

SOURCES FOR BENCHMARKS: (1, 2, 7) Pew Center on the States survey of states; (3) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; (4) Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS-416; (5, 6) Medicaid/SCHIP Dental Association and American Academy of Pediatrics; (8) National Oral Health Surveillance System.

1. "Contract Between the State of Tennessee, Department of Finance and Administration, Bureau of TennCare and Delta Dental of Tennessee," October 1, 2010. <http://www.tn.gov/tennicare/forms/TennDent.pdf>, (accessed November 11, 2010).