

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



2011 GRADE

California meets half of the eight policy benchmarks for improving children's dental health, but children in the state still face significant barriers to accessing care. A recent study by Children Now revealed that one in five California children under age 12 had never seen a dentist.¹ To help alleviate this problem, stakeholders in the state are exploring innovative ways to expand the dental workforce. Pew is supporting a campaign in California to authorize a new type of dental provider who can offer primary care.

Although the state does not yet meet the benchmark for water fluoridation, it has improved significantly since 2006, with over half of the state now receiving the benefits of fluoridated water.

HOW WELL IS CALIFORNIA 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%	25%		✓
2010	Hygienists can place sealants without dentist's prior exam	YES	YES	✓	✓
2008	Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies	58.8%	75%		
2009	Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care	38.9%	38.1%	✓	
2010	Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid	32.8%	60.5%		
2010	Pays medical providers for early preventive dental health care	YES	YES	✓	✓
2010	Authorizes new primary care dental providers	NO	YES		
2010	Tracks data on children's dental health	YES	YES	✓	✓
Total score				4 of 8	4 of 8

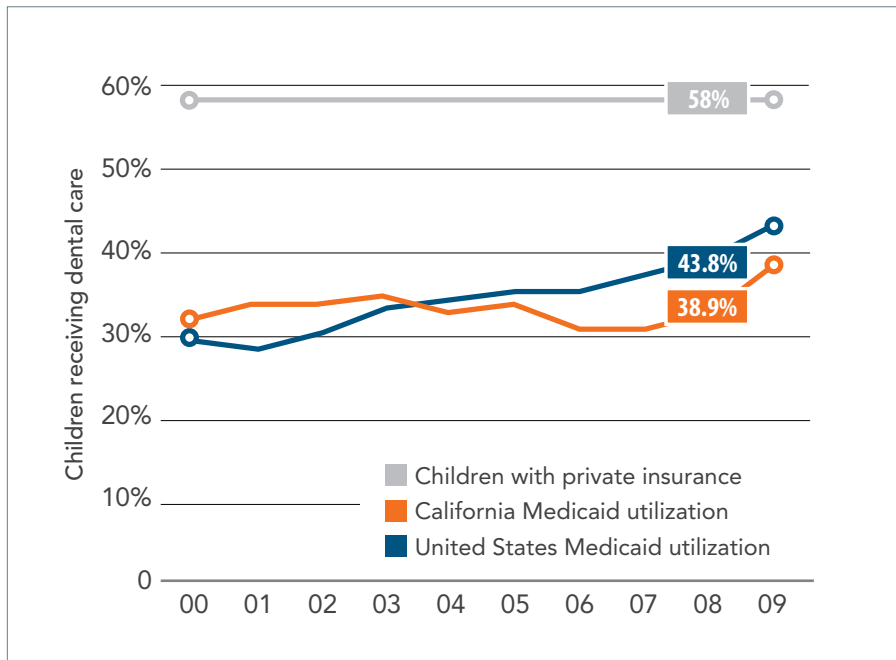
Grading: A = 6-8 points B = 5 points C = 4 points D = 3 points F = 0-2 points



The Pew Center on the States is a division of The Pew Charitable Trusts that identifies and advances effective solutions to critical issues facing states. Pew is a nonprofit organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life.

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. Children Now, "California Report Card 2011: Setting the Agenda for Children," Children Now (2011), 54. http://www.childrennow.org/uploads/documents/reportcard_2011.pdf, (accessed February 11, 2011).