

# Falling Short: Most States Lag on Dental Sealants

2012 GRADE

# Washington, D.C.

Dental sealants are clear plastic coatings that take only a few minutes to apply to the chewing surfaces of permanent molars, the most cavity-prone teeth. Research shows that school-based sealant programs reduce tooth decay by 60 percent at one-third the cost of a filling.

F



How well is **Washington, D.C.**, protecting kids from tooth decay?

Sealant Benchmarks	State	Goal
% of high-need schools with sealant programs	<25%	75%+
Unnecessary rules restricting hygienists from applying sealants in schools*	Most severe restrictions	No restrictions
Participation in National Oral Health Surveillance System	No data submitted	Yes – and submitted recent data
Meeting Healthy People 2010 sealant goal	No	Yes

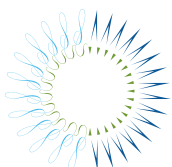
**WASHINGTON, D.C.,**  
earned 1 out of a  
possible 11 points.

Grading:  
A = 10-11  
B = 8-9  
C = 6-7  
D = 3-5  
F = 0-2

For a detailed description of the grading system, see the Methodology section of the report at [www.pewstates.org/dental-sealants-methodology](http://www.pewstates.org/dental-sealants-methodology).



To see all states' grades, see the map at [www.pewstates.org/dental-sealants](http://www.pewstates.org/dental-sealants).



THE  
**PEW**  
CENTER ON THE STATES

\* Pew surveyed states to learn whether regulations require dentists to examine children before hygienists can apply sealants at schools – restrictions that research shows are unnecessary. State policies were categorized as follows: A dentist's exam is not required – no restrictions; a dentist's exam is sometimes required (e.g., certain classifications of dental hygienists can apply sealants without a dentist's prior exam) – some restrictions; a dentist's exam is always required – severe restrictions; and a dentist's exam is always required and the dentist must remain on-site while the hygienist applies the sealant – most severe restrictions.