



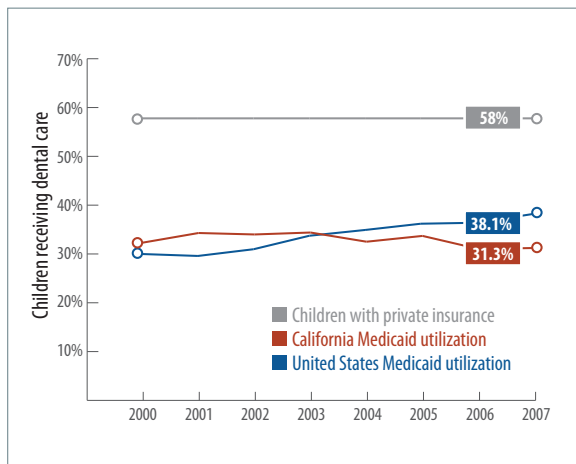
The Cost of Delay: State Dental Policies Fail One in Five Children California



CALIFORNIA meets just half of the eight policy benchmarks aimed at addressing children's dental health needs. More than a quarter of the state's high-risk schools benefit from sealant programs, and those programs make efficient use of hygienists. But California is one of five states moving in the wrong direction on the percentage of Medicaid-enrolled children who see a dentist each year: Only about 31 percent received care in 2007, the latest year for which data are available, down from 32 percent in 2000. And only about 27 percent of the population had access to community water supplies with optimal fluoride as of 2006, the latest available data at the time of this writing. A state mandate enacted in 1995 means that areas including the Metropolitan Water District in Los Angeles have adopted fluoridation since then, but implementation has been slow because of a requirement that localities find outside funds.

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 2007.



SOURCES FOR NATIONAL BENCHMARKS: 1) Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors; 2) American Dental Hygienists' Association; 3) Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS-416; 4) American Dental Association; 5) Pew Center on the States, National Academy for State Health Policy and American Academy of Pediatrics; 6) National Oral Health Surveillance System.

HOW WELL IS CALIFORNIA RESPONDING?

MEASURED AGAINST THE NATIONAL BENCHMARK FOR EIGHT POLICY APPROACHES

	STATE	NATIONAL	MEETS OR EXCEEDS
Share of high-risk schools with sealant programs, 2009	25-49%	25%	✓
Hygienists can place sealants without dentist's prior exam, 2009	Y	Y	✓
Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies, 2006	27.1%	75%	
Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care, 2007	31.3%	38.1%	
Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid, 2008	33.8%	60.5%	
Pays medical providers for early preventive dental health care, 2009	Y	Y	✓
Authorizes new primary care dental providers, 2009	N	Y	
Tracks data on children's dental health, 2009	Y	Y	✓
Total score	C		4 of 8

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

Download the full report and explanatory notes by visiting www.pewcenteronthestates.org/costofdelay.



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