



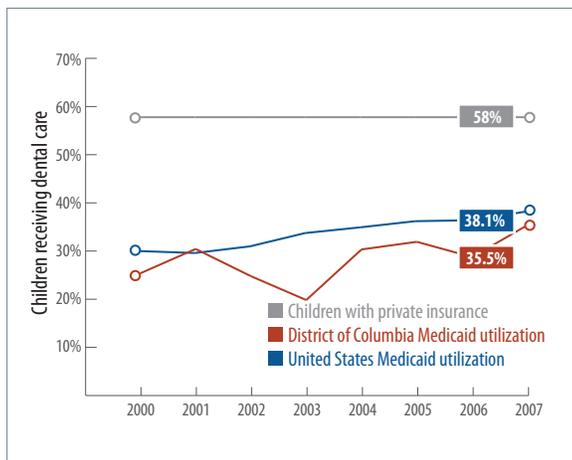
The Cost of Delay: State Dental Policies Fail One in Five Children District of Columbia



THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA meets just three of eight policy benchmarks aimed at addressing children's dental health needs. Washington, D.C.'s low percentage of Medicaid-enrolled children who received dental services in 2007 (the latest year for which data are available)—35.5 percent—actually represents an increase from a low of 20 percent just four years earlier.¹ The improvement can be traced to the District's increase in Medicaid reimbursement rates for dentists in 2006. D.C. has not made progress on all fronts, however—its sealant programs reach less than one-quarter of high-risk schools, and it neglects to submit nationally comparable data to the National Oral Health Surveillance System. The District can boast, though, that it is the only jurisdiction in Pew's analysis to provide optimally fluoridated water to all of its citizens on community systems.

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.

¹ Mercer Government Human Services Consulting, "District of Columbia Rate Development Process for the Contract Period August 1, 2007 through July 21, 2008," http://app.ocp.dc.gov/pdf/DCHC-2007-R-5050_Amd1_2.pdf (accessed December 7, 2009).

HOW WELL IS THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA 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%	25%	
Hygienists can place sealants without dentist's prior exam, 2009	Y	Y	✓
Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies, 2006	100%	75%	✓
Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care, 2007	35.5%	38.1%	
Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid, 2008	93.2%	60.5%	✓
Pays medical providers for early preventive dental health care, 2009	N	Y	
Authorizes new primary care dental providers, 2009	N	Y	
Tracks data on children's dental health, 2009	N	Y	
Total score	D		3 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.



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.

901 E Street NW | 10th Floor | Washington, DC 20004 | www.pewcenteronthestates.org