



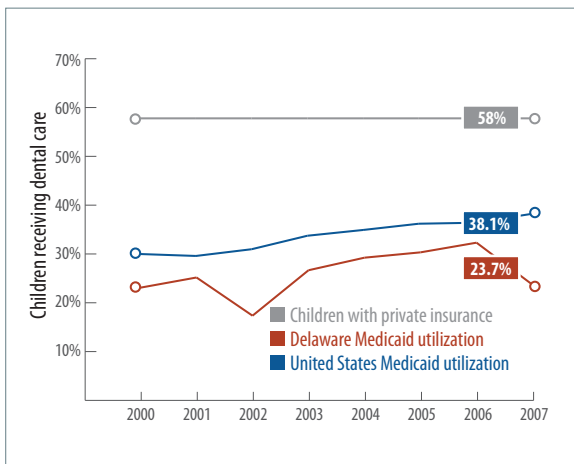
# The Cost of Delay: State Dental Policies Fail One in Five Children Delaware



**DELAWARE** meets just two of eight policy benchmarks aimed at addressing children's dental health needs. The state exemplifies the fragile nature of children's dental programs across the country. Delaware suspended its school sealant program in 2008 after losing its program coordinator, but plans to restart the initiative in 2010.<sup>1</sup> Delaware's rate of Medicaid-enrolled children who received dental care in 2007 was the lowest nationwide, at 23.7 percent. Kids' access to sealants is further restricted by the state's requirement that hygienists cannot place sealants without a dentist's prior exam. In addition, physicians in Delaware are not reimbursed for providing basic preventive dental care. On a more positive note, the state is among the nation's leaders in Medicaid payment rates to dentists, reimbursing dentists at 80 percent of the amount they bill. And nearly 74 percent of Delaware's population had access to community water supplies with optimal fluoride as of 2006, the latest available data at the time of this writing—just missing the national goal of 75 percent.

## 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.

<sup>1</sup> Pew Center on the States interview with Greg McClure, Delaware dental director, November 4, 2009.

## HOW WELL IS DELAWARE RESPONDING?

MEASURED AGAINST THE NATIONAL BENCHMARK FOR EIGHT POLICY APPROACHES

	STATE	NATIONAL	MEETS OR EXCEEDS
Share of high-risk schools with sealant programs, 2009	0%	25%	
Hygienists can place sealants without dentist's prior exam, 2009	N	Y	
Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies, 2006	73.6%	75%	
Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care, 2007	23.7%	38.1%	
Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid, 2008	80%	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	Y	Y	✓
<b>Total score</b>	<b>F</b>		<b>2 of 8</b>

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](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/costofdelay).



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