



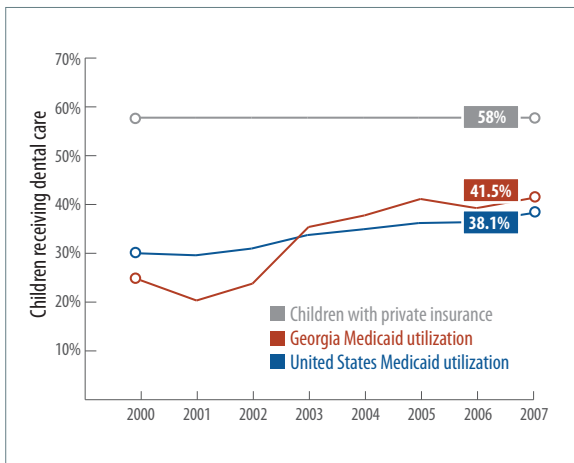
# The Cost of Delay: State Dental Policies Fail One in Five Children Georgia



**GEORGIA** meets just half of eight policy benchmarks aimed at addressing children's dental health needs. The state provides optimal fluoridation to nearly 96 percent of its population on community water supplies, and it just exceeds the national average for the rate of Medicaid-enrolled children who received dental care in 2007, the latest year for which data are available. While its sealant programs meet the benchmark of reaching at least one-quarter of high-risk schools, however, rules governing hygienists working in those programs are among the most stringent in the nation. Georgia also does not reimburse medical providers for offering basic preventive dental services to Medicaid-enrolled children. In August 2008 the state was awarded a capacity-building grant from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which will help the state plan and track responses to the unmet dental needs children face.

## 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 GEORGIA 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     | N        | Y        |                  |
| Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies, 2006     | 95.8%    | 75%      | ✓                |
| Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care, 2007        | 41.5%    | 38.1%    | ✓                |
| Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid, 2008   | 59.9%    | 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>C</b> |          | <b>4 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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