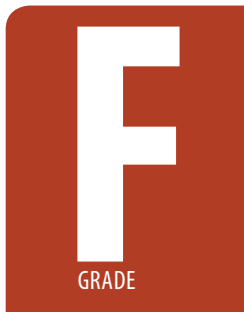




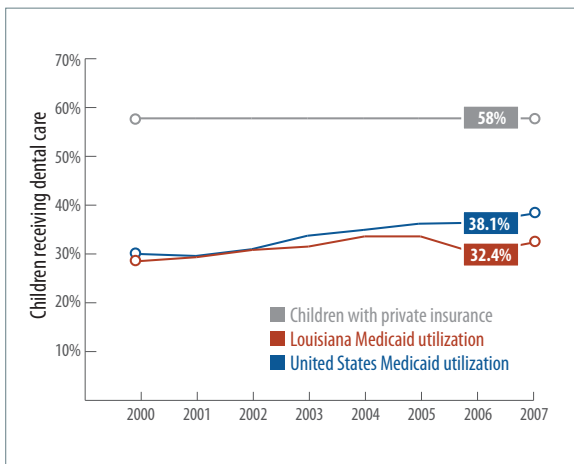
# The Cost of Delay: State Dental Policies Fail One in Five Children Louisiana



**LOUISIANA** meets just two of eight policy benchmarks aimed at addressing children's dental health needs. Pew calculates that more than a third—1.4 million people—of the state's population do not have access to dentists. Just less than one in three Medicaid-enrolled children statewide received dental care in 2007, the latest year for which data are available. Although a quarter of high-risk schools have sealant programs, Louisiana continues to require a dentist's exam before a hygienist can apply sealants. Additionally, the state does not submit data to the National Oral Health Surveillance System. Louisiana has made some progress toward implementing preventive strategies by mandating that communities fluoridate their water—a much-needed step, as the water of 60 percent of the state's residents is not fluoridated. But Louisiana's budget crisis has hampered the effort: The state lacks the necessary funds to pay for the improvements it promised community systems under the legislation.<sup>1</sup>

## 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> A. Wold, "Water Fluoridation Delayed Due to Lack of State Funding," *Baton Rouge Advocate*, May 18, 2009.

## HOW WELL IS LOUISIANA 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	40.4%	75%	
Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care, 2007	32.4%	38.1%	
Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid, 2008	71.5%	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	
<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).



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 | 10<sup>th</sup> Floor | Washington, DC 20004 | [www.pewcenteronthestates.org](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org)