



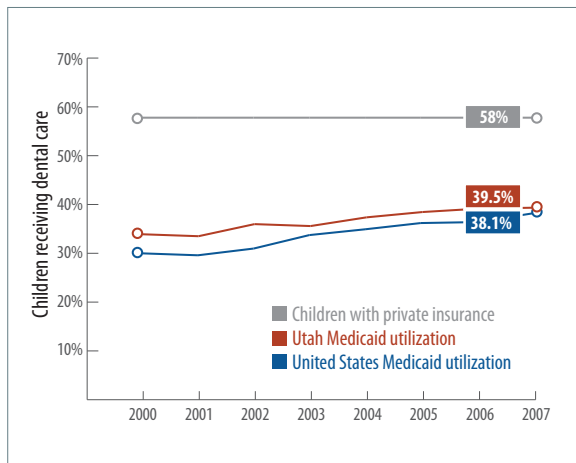
# The Cost of Delay: State Dental Policies Fail One in Five Children Utah



**UTAH** meets just three of eight policy benchmarks aimed at addressing children's dental health needs. More than 39 percent of the state's Medicaid-enrolled children received dental care in 2007, the latest year for which data are available, just surpassing the national average. And Utah reimburses medical professionals for providing basic preventive dental services. But the state falls short on two proven preventive strategies: sealants and fluoridation. Less than a quarter of the state's high-risk schools have sealant programs—a challenge made more difficult by the state's restrictions prohibiting hygienists from applying sealants without a dentist's prior exam. And just over half of Utah residents on community water supplies have access to fluoridated water. The state recently sliced its Medicaid reimbursement rates for dentists, a budget-balancing maneuver in the fiscal crisis that may prove less cost effective in the long run.

## 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 UTAH 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	N	Y	
Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies, 2006	54.3%	75%	
Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care, 2007	39.5%	38.1%	✓
Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid, 2008	45.1%	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	✓
<b>Total score</b>	<b>D</b>		<b>3 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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