



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

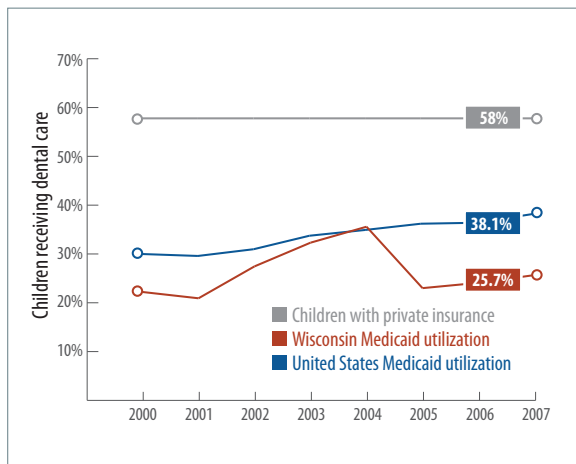


WISCONSIN meets just half of the eight policy benchmarks aimed at addressing children's dental health needs. The state reimburses dentists for Medicaid at a level that falls short of the national average, and it ranks among the worst states in Medicaid utilization: Only about 26 percent of Medicaid-enrolled children received any dental services in 2007, the latest year for which data are available. The good news? Wisconsin provides fluoridated water to nearly 90 percent of its population on community supplies, and the state reimburses medical professionals for providing basic preventive dental care to Medicaid-enrolled children. The state's Seal-A-Smile school-based sealant program has provided dental sealants to nearly 30,000 children in its nine years of operation.

The program does not yet reach more than one-quarter of high-risk schools, but an infusion of more than \$1.3 million in public and private funds announced in October 2009 will enable more children to be served.¹

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 Wisconsin Department of Health Services, "Children's Dental Program Gets Boost to Help Prevent Decay" (press release, October 21, 2009), <http://dhs.wi.gov/News/PressReleases/2009/102109smile.htm> (accessed December 7, 2009).

HOW WELL IS WISCONSIN 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	89.7%	75%	✓
Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care, 2007	25.7%	38.1%	
Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid, 2008	40.1%	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	✓
Total score	C		4 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.



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