

# The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Matter

## Alaska

# A

2011 GRADE

**Alaska** meets six of the eight policy benchmarks—one more than it met in 2010. The improvement is due to the state beginning reimbursement of medical care providers for preventive dental health services.

A landmark study was released in 2010, examining the Dental Health Aide Therapists (DHATs) who work for Alaska Native tribal health corporations. An evaluation of the first DHATs, who work in remote villages, found that they provide safe, competent care and are working well under the general supervision of dentists. Additionally, the study reported high rates of patient satisfaction with DHATs.<sup>1</sup>

### HOW WELL IS ALASKA RESPONDING?

2011: **A**

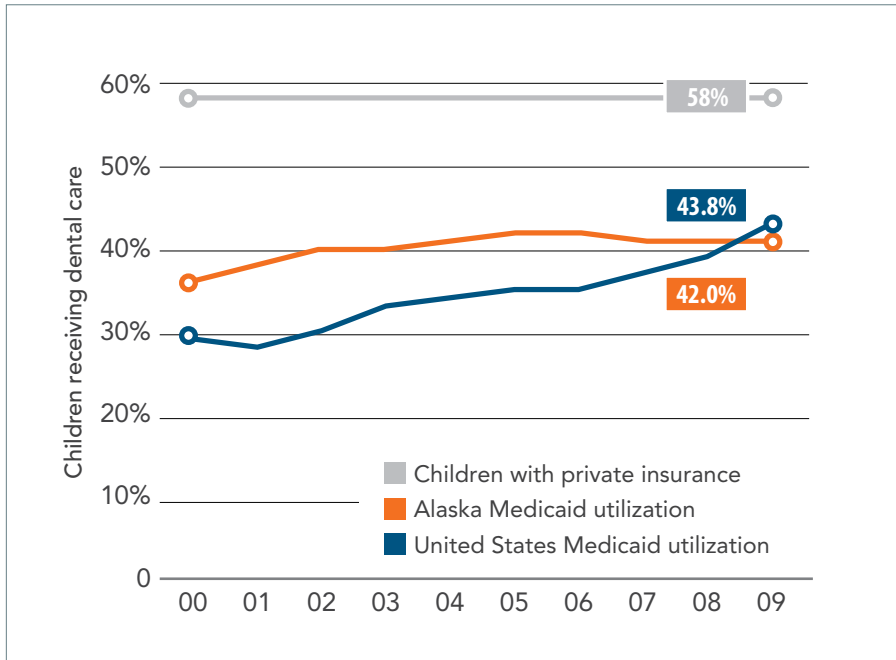
2010: **B**

DATA YEAR	MEASURED AGAINST THE NATIONAL BENCHMARKS FOR EIGHT POLICY APPROACHES	STATE	NATIONAL	MEETS OR EXCEEDS	MET OR EXCEEDED
2010	Share of high-risk schools with sealant programs	75-100%	25%	✓	✓
2010	Hygienists can place sealants without dentist's prior exam	YES	YES	✓	✓
2008	Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies	62.8%	75%		
2009	Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care	42.0%	38.1%	✓	✓
2010	Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid	91.4%	60.5%	✓	✓
2010	Pays medical providers for early preventive dental health care	YES	YES	✓	
2010	Authorizes new primary care dental providers	NO <sup>2</sup>	YES		
2010	Tracks data on children's dental health	YES	YES	✓	✓
<b>Total score</b>				<b>6 of 8</b>	<b>5 of 8</b>

**Grading: A = 6-8 points    B = 5 points    C = 4 points    D = 3 points    F = 0-2 points**

## 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 2009.



SOURCE: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS-416.

SOURCES FOR BENCHMARKS: (1, 2, 7) Pew Center on the States survey of states; (3) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; (4) Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS-416; (5, 6) Medicaid/SCHIP Dental Association and American Academy of Pediatrics; (8) National Oral Health Surveillance System.

1. "New Study Finds Alaska Dental Therapists Provide Safe, Competent and Appropriate Care," W.K. Kellogg Foundation, October 26, 2010; <http://www.wkkf.org/news/Articles/2010/10/Alaska-Dental-Therapist-Program-Study.aspx>, (accessed December 3, 2010)
2. Dental Health Aide Therapists are authorized under federal law and the authority of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, not the state.