States Stalled on Dental Sealants

Minnesota

Dental sealants are clear plastic coatings applied to cavity-prone permanent molars. Research shows that school-based sealant programs reduce tooth decay by 60 percent at one-third the cost of a filling. Minnesota’s grade in 2014, a B-, is lower than the B earned in 2012 because Minnesota Medicaid requires that a dentist examine a child before reimbursing community health center sealant programs.

How well is Minnesota protecting kids from tooth decay?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sealant benchmarks</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of high-need schools with sealant programs</td>
<td>25-49%</td>
<td>25-49%</td>
<td>&gt;75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary rules restricting hygienists from applying sealants in schools?*</td>
<td>Yes—some restrictions</td>
<td>Yes—some restrictions</td>
<td>No restrictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in National Oral Health Surveillance System?</td>
<td>Yes—and submitted recent data</td>
<td>Yes—and submitted recent data</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Healthy People 2010 sealant objective?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2012 Grade: B

2014 Grade: B-

Minnesota earned 8 out of a possible 11 points on sealant policies.

For a detailed description of the grading system, see the methodology section of the report at pewtrusts.org/dentalsealants.

* Pew and the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) surveyed states to learn whether regulations require dentists to examine children before hygienists can apply sealants at schools — restrictions that research shows are unnecessary. State policies were categorized as follows: A dentist’s exam is not required — no restrictions; a dentist’s exam is sometimes required (e.g., certain classifications of dental hygienists can apply sealants without a dentist’s prior exam) — some restrictions; a dentist’s exam is always required — severe restrictions; and a dentist’s exam is always required and the dentist must remain on-site while the hygienist applies the sealant — most severe restrictions.