



# States Stalled on Dental Sealants

## Texas

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. Texas mistakenly reported in 2012 that sealants must be placed under direct supervision when in fact hygienists can place a sealant without the dentist nearby. Although this correction earned Texas one more point, and the state earned an additional point by meeting the Healthy People 2010 objective, the state's grade in 2014, a D-, did not change from 2012. Texas received a "minus" because the state Medicaid program requires that parents be present for any dental services delivered as a condition of reimbursement.

**D-** 2014 Grade

2012 Grade: **D**

## How well is **Texas** protecting kids from tooth decay?

Sealant benchmarks	2012	2014	Goal
Percentage of high-need schools with sealant programs	<25%	<25%	>75%
Unnecessary rules restricting hygienists from applying sealants in schools?*	Yes—most severe restrictions	Yes—severe restrictions	No restrictions
Participation in National Oral Health Surveillance System?	Yes—and submitted recent data	Yes—and submitted recent data	Yes—and submitted recent data
Meeting Healthy People 2010 sealant objective?	No	Yes	Yes

### Grading

A	10-11
B	8-9
C	6-7
D	3-5
F	0-2



**5**

Texas earned 5 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](http://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.