

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

## Arkansas



2011 GRADE

**Arkansas** met four of the eight policy benchmarks for improving children's dental health needs, two more than it met in 2010. The change in grade reflects the fact that in 2009, more than half of the children in Arkansas' Medicaid program received dental services, a notable increase.

The state is poised to make further improvement since three pieces of legislation were signed into law by the governor in early 2011. One of these laws guarantees fluoridated water to communities over a certain size; a second allows medical providers to provide preventive dental health services like fluoride varnish; and a third creates a category of public health dental hygienists who have greater ability to place sealants without a dentist's prior exam.<sup>1</sup>

### HOW WELL IS ARKANSAS RESPONDING?

2011: **C**

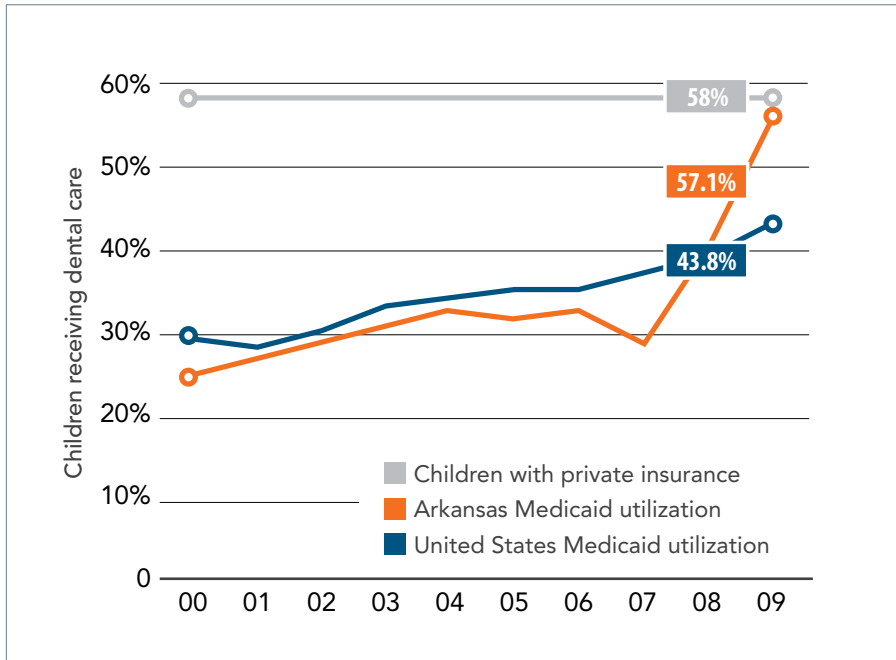
2010: **F**

| 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                     | <25%  | 25%      |                  |                 |
| 2010               | Hygienists can place sealants without dentist's prior exam           | YES   | YES      | ✓                |                 |
| 2008               | Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies           | 60.5% | 75%      |                  |                 |
| 2009               | Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care              | 57.1% | 38.1%    | ✓                |                 |
| 2010               | Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid         | 63.9% | 60.5%    | ✓                | ✓               |
| 2010               | Pays medical providers for early preventive dental health care       | NO    | YES      |                  |                 |
| 2010               | Authorizes new primary care dental providers                         | NO    | YES      |                  |                 |
| 2010               | Tracks data on children's dental health                              | YES   | YES      | ✓                | ✓               |
| <b>Total score</b> |                                                                      |       |          | <b>4 of 8</b>    | <b>2 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.** While more than half of children on Medicaid received care in 2009, they were less likely to be treated than kids with private insurance.



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. Arkansas 2011 Acts 89 (<http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2011/2011R/Acts/Act89.pdf>), 90 (<http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2011/2011R/Acts/Act90.pdf>), and 197 (<http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2011/2011R/Acts/Act197.pdf>)