



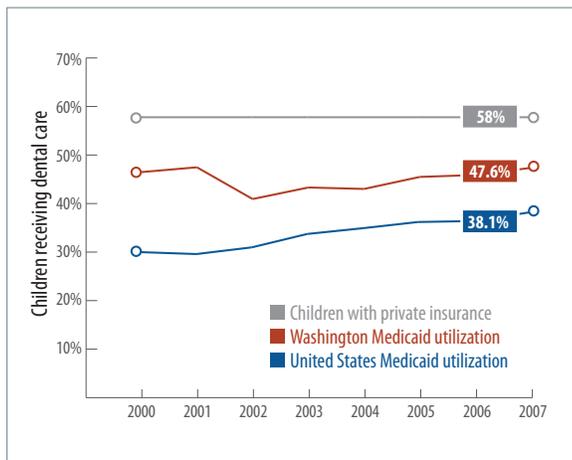
The Cost of Delay: State Dental Policies Fail One in Five Children Washington



WASHINGTON meets five of eight policy benchmarks aimed at addressing children's dental health needs. At least a quarter of its high-risk schools benefit from sealant programs, and the state makes effective use of hygienists in these settings. It also reimburses medical professionals who offer basic preventive services to Medicaid-enrolled children. Washington's Access to Baby and Child Dentistry program provides a national model for train general dentists to care for young children. Washington ranks among the top five states for Medicaid utilization—with nearly 48 percent of Medicaid-enrolled children seeing a dentist in 2007, the latest year for which data are available—but the state reimburses dentists for Medicaid at a level that falls short of the national average. Moreover, the state needs at least 110 more dentists to meet the needs of its residents in shortage areas. And only 63 percent of Washington's population on community water supplies has access to drinking water with optimal levels of fluoride.

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.

HOW WELL IS WASHINGTON RESPONDING?

MEASURED AGAINST THE NATIONAL BENCHMARK FOR EIGHT POLICY APPROACHES

	STATE	NATIONAL	MEETS OR EXCEEDS
Share of high-risk schools with sealant programs, 2009	25-49%	25%	✓
Hygienists can place sealants without dentist's prior exam, 2009	Y	Y	✓
Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies, 2006	62.9%	75%	
Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care, 2007	47.6%	38.1%	✓
Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid, 2008	46%	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	B		5 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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901 E Street NW | 10th Floor | Washington, DC 20004 | www.pewcenteronthestates.org