



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

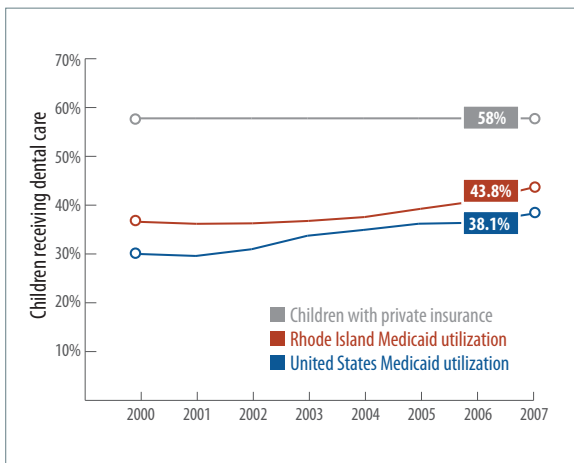


RHODE ISLAND is a national leader, meeting six of eight policy benchmarks aimed at addressing children’s dental health needs. More than 80 percent of the residents on community water supplies have fluoridated water, hygienists are able to provide sealants without a prior dentist’s exam, and half of the state’s high-risk schools have sealant programs. Although Rhode Island’s overall Medicaid reimbursement rate to dentists is lower than the national average, the state has taken steps to pay enhanced rates to dentists who provide services to disadvantaged children through its Rite Smiles program. The initiative, which targets children born after May 1, 2000, led participation in Medicaid to grow from 27 dentists to 217—of about 500 statewide—between late 2006 and late 2007, the

program’s first year.¹

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.

¹ A. Snyder, “Increasing Access to Dental Care in Medicaid: Targeted Programs for Four Populations.” *National Academy for State Health Policy* (2009): 17–20.

HOW WELL IS RHODE ISLAND RESPONDING?

MEASURED AGAINST THE NATIONAL BENCHMARK FOR EIGHT POLICY APPROACHES

	STATE	NATIONAL	MEETS OR EXCEEDS
Share of high-risk schools with sealant programs, 2009	50-74%	25%	✓
Hygienists can place sealants without dentist’s prior exam, 2009	Y	Y	✓
Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies, 2006	84.6%	75%	✓
Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care, 2007	43.8%	38.1%	✓
Share of dentists’ median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid, 2008	31.7%	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	A		6 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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