



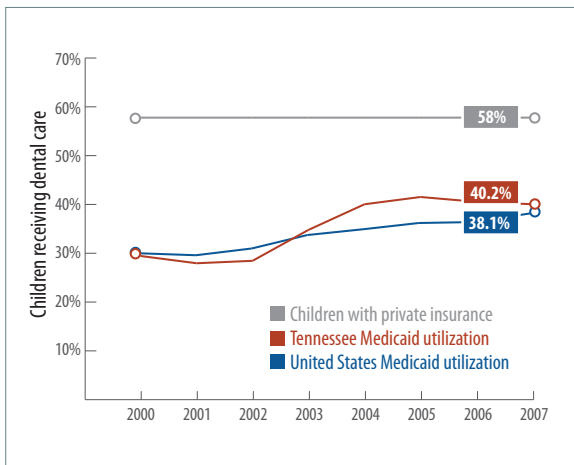
The Cost of Delay: State Dental Policies Fail One in Five Children Tennessee



TENNESSEE meets just half of the eight policy benchmarks aimed at addressing children's dental health needs. The state overhauled its Medicaid dental benefit for children in 2002, making improvements that have led Tennessee to exceed the national averages for payment rates to dentists and children's use of services. In addition, the state has school-based sealant programs in more than 50 percent of its high-risk schools, one of only 10 states to do so. But Tennessee does not reimburse primary care physicians for providing basic preventive services such as fluoride varnish, and it fails to report data to the National Oral Health Surveillance System. Pew calculates that almost 20 percent, or 1.2 million, of the state's residents are unserved by dentists, and at least 230 additional providers are needed.

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 TENNESSEE 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 | N | Y | |
| Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies, 2006 | 93.7% | 75% | ✓ |
| Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care, 2007 | 40.2% | 38.1% | ✓ |
| Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid, 2008 | 75.5% | 60.5% | ✓ |
| Pays medical providers for early preventive dental health care, 2009 | N | Y | |
| Authorizes new primary care dental providers, 2009 | N | Y | |
| Tracks data on children's dental health, 2009 | N | Y | |
| Total score | C | | 4 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.