



THE
PEW
CENTER ON THE STATES

Falling Short:
Most States Lag
on Dental Sealants

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WHY PREVENTION MATTERS

- Decay affects children's ability to eat, speak, socialize, sleep and play
- School Performance Diminished
 - **NC Study** – Children with poor dental health were 3 times as likely to miss school due to dental pain
 - **CA Study** – Teens who had reported oral health pain had lower grade-point averages





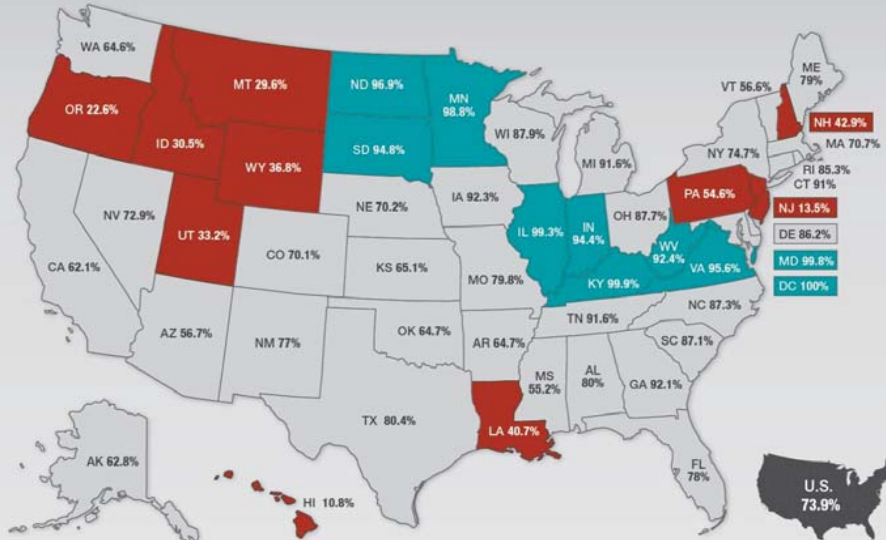
- Preventable dental conditions were the primary diagnosis in **830,000+** visits to hospital ERs nationwide in 2009 — a 16% increase from 2006.
- Children accounted for more than **49,000** of these ER visits.
- In 2011, **only 43%** of EPSDT-eligible children received a preventive dental service.

ONE PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

Community water fluoridation: The top 10 and bottom 10

72 million

Americans who are on public water systems lack access to fluoridated drinking water



Percentage of residents on public water systems who are receiving fluoridated water in each state¹

- Top 10 states with highest percentage of fluoridation
- Bottom 10 states with lowest percentage of fluoridation

The CDC has recognized **water fluoridation** as one of “10 great public health achievements of the 20th century.”²

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “2010 Water Fluoridation Statistics”. Data covers only residents whose homes are connected to public water systems.
² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Ten Great Public Health Achievements of the 20th Century”, <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/0002a0209.htm>

WHAT ARE SEALANTS?

- Plastic coatings that take only a few minutes to apply
- Applied to the chewing surfaces of permanent molars — the most cavity-prone teeth
- **45** years of research proves their effectiveness



WHAT ARE SEALANTS?



- **60%** reduction in tooth decay for up to five years after sealants are placed — and at 1/3 the cost of a filling
- \$1 spent on school sealant programs = **\$2 saved** (CO data)

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY



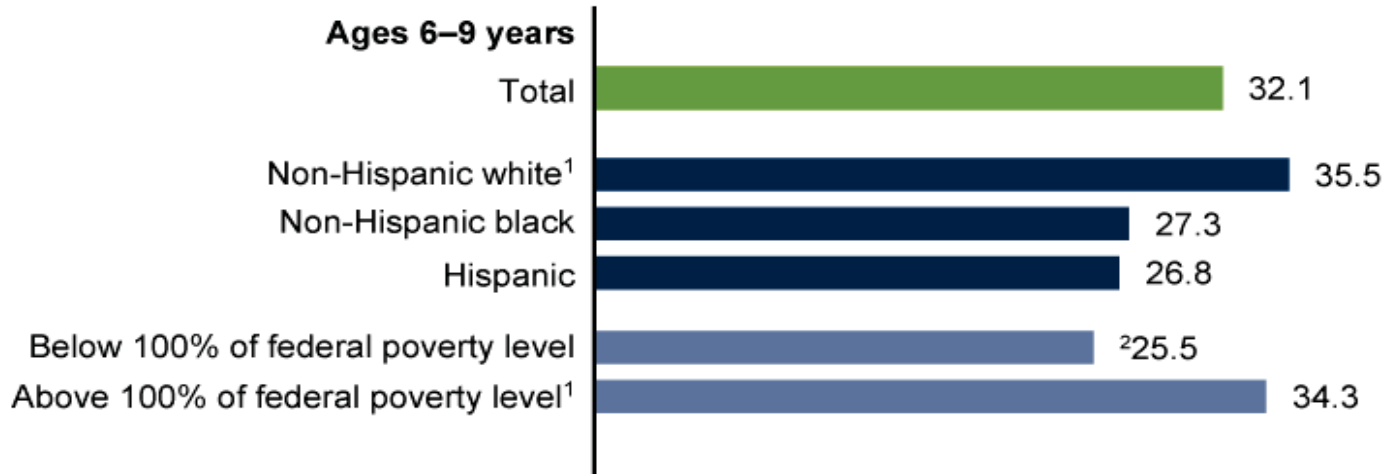
“Dental sealants are effective at preventing dental decay; both children and adults can benefit from sealant application.”

“Sealants can save time, money, and the discomfort sometimes associated with dental fillings.”

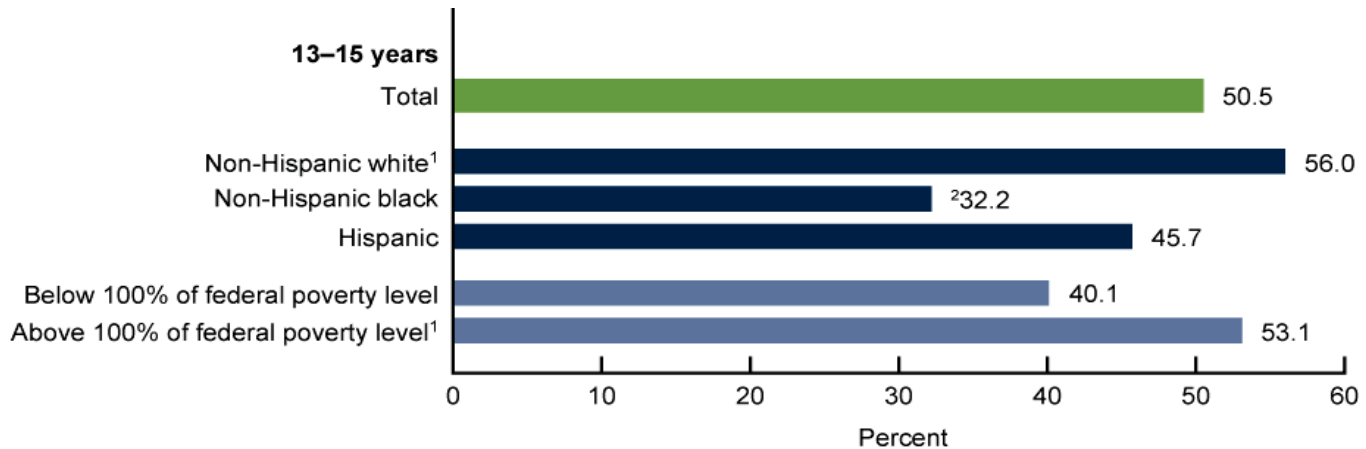


“The Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors supports and recommends the continued use of composites and dental sealants for all populations.”

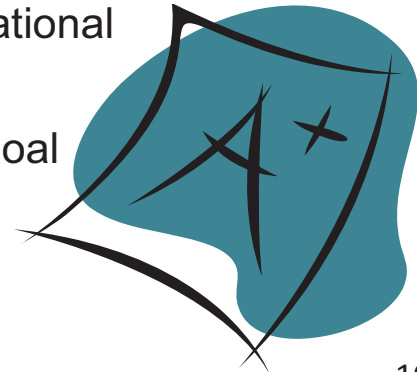
Prevalence of Sealants Among U.S. Children, 2009-2010



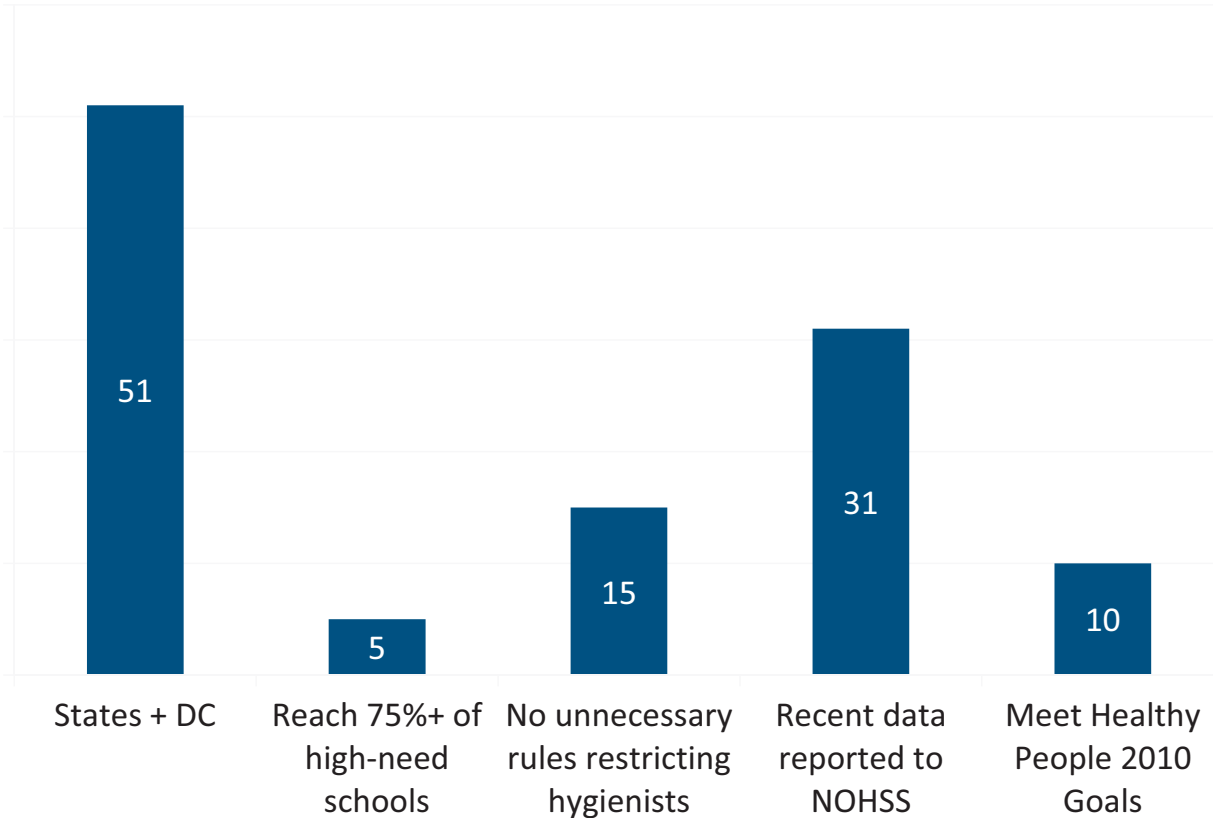
Prevalence of Sealants Among U.S. Children, 2009-2010



- Different from previous 50 state report cards
- Grading states on 4 sealant benchmarks
 1. Percentage of High Need Schools with Sealant Programs
 2. Rules Restricting Hygienists
 3. Collecting and Submitting Data to the National Oral Health Surveillance System
 4. Meeting Healthy People 2010 Sealant Goal



OVERALL FINDINGS





BENCHMARK #1: Percentage of high-need schools with sealant programs

- Directly reach kids who need sealants most, but are least likely to receive them
- 2009 CDC expert panel advises programs that they should “seal teeth of children even if follow-up [care] cannot be ensured”





BENCHMARK #1: Percentage of high-need schools with sealant programs

- *Benchmark:* Over 75 percent of high-need schools
- 4 total points possible
- **Only five states meet this benchmark**

BENCHMARK #2: Unnecessary rules restricting hygienists from placing sealants

- 2009 CDC expert panel concluded that a comprehensive prior exam is not needed before placing sealant, a visual assessment is sufficient
- Hygienists are trained to perform these tasks safely and effectively



BENCHMARK #2: Unnecessary rules restricting hygienists from placing sealants

- One state found that eliminating the prior exam rule saved 20% in costs per child for sealant application
- Eliminating prior exam rule can decrease lost class time and free up available dentists for more complex tasks





BENCHMARK #2: Unnecessary rules restricting hygienists from placing sealants

- *Benchmark:* No dentist's prior exam required
- 4 total points possible
- **15 states met this benchmark**

BENCHMARK #3: Collecting, submitting data to the National Oral Health Surveillance System (NOHSS)

- Allows policymakers to make informed decisions
- *Benchmark:* Submitted recent data
- 2 points possible
- **31 states meet this benchmark**



BENCHMARK #4: Meeting the “Healthy People 2010” Sealant Goal

- Meet national health objectives
- Healthy People 2010 Oral Health Goals include:
 - Have sealants be applied to 50% of children
 - No disparities among kids based on income or other factors





BENCHMARK #4: Meeting the “Healthy People 2010” Sealant Goal

- *Benchmark:* Have recent NOHSS data indicating 50% of 3rd graders have sealants
- 1 point possible
- **Only 10 states meet this benchmark**

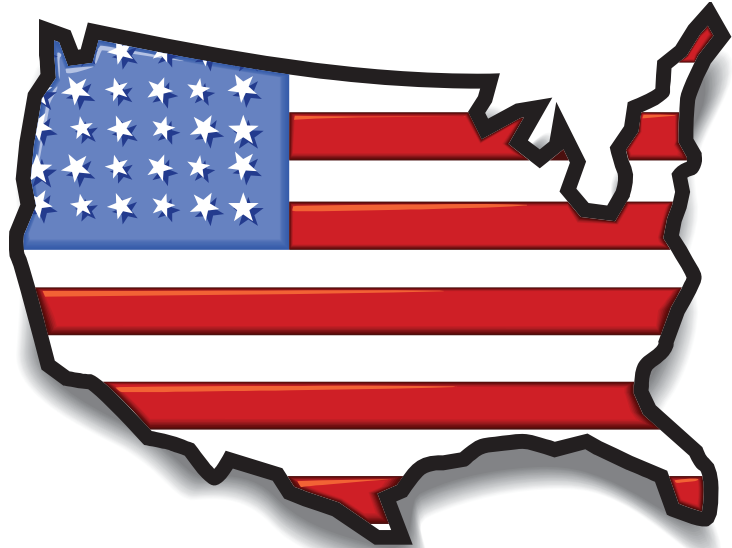
GRADING THE STATES

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



GRADING THE STATES

- **A:** 5 states
- **B:** 8 states
- **C:** 17 states
- **D:** 15 states
- **F:** 6 states





Get the right people to care

- Elected officials and other policy makers
- Key stakeholders
- Editorial writers, columnists and key bloggers
- The public



Build buy-in for sealant programs

- Use report to initiate broader education for:
 - School officials
 - Parents organizations
 - Children's advocacy organizations

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