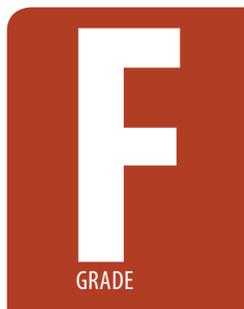




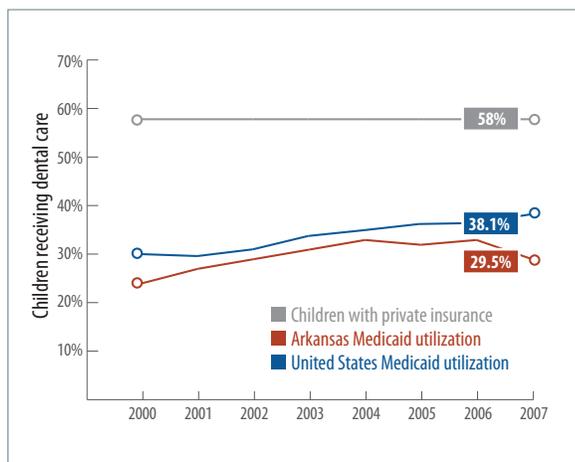
The Cost of Delay: State Dental Policies Fail One in Five Children Arkansas



ARKANSAS meets just two of the eight policy benchmarks aimed at addressing children’s dental health needs. It is one of five states in the South receiving a failing grade. Arkansas exceeds the national average for Medicaid reimbursement rates and submits state-level data; in all other areas, however, it falls far short. This is particularly true of the number of Medicaid-enrolled children receiving dental care: Less than 30 percent did in 2007, the latest year for which data are available. Arkansas’ sealant programs need improvement, too—less than a quarter of the state’s high-risk schools have them, and the state continues to prohibit dental hygienists from applying sealants without a dentist’s exam. Arkansas is showing some positive movement toward reform. Its fluoridation rate—64.4 percent—is approaching the goal of 75 percent, and several mobile dental units, sponsored by Children’s Hospital, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Arkansas and Delta Dental of Arkansas, began serving schools in the state in 2009.¹

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 C. Park, “First of 3 Traveling Dental Units for Kids Rolls into Arkansas Clinic to Serve 19 Schools in Center of State,” *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, April 16, 2009.

HOW WELL IS ARKANSAS 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%	25%	
Hygienists can place sealants without dentist’s prior exam, 2009	N	Y	
Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies, 2006	64.4%	75%	
Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care, 2007	29.5%	38.1%	
Share of dentists’ median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid, 2008	70.2%	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	Y	Y	✓
Total score	F		2 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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