



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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Survey Shows Lack of Dental Care for Children

Low use of dental sealants, high number of cavities

BALTIMORE, MD (January 29, 2008) – Less than 30 percent of Maryland Kindergarten and third grade students have dental sealants, according to a report released by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH.) The sealants are a recommended preventative measure to guard against tooth decay.

The report, the *Survey of the Oral Health of Maryland School Children: 2005-06*, also states that about 33 percent from that same group have untreated dental disease.

These findings are the result of a study funded by DHMH to assess the oral health status among Maryland's school children. Approximately 2,300 students from 35 public schools 21 local Maryland jurisdictions participated in the survey.

"This report is another stark reminder that access to dental care for Maryland's children must be improved," said DHMH John M. Colmers. "Governor O'Malley's FY 2009 budget proposes to invest an additional \$16 million in fee increases for dentists and dental clinics as an initial down payment to reverse the trend. "

Other results found in the report note that those without dental sealants typically had not visited a dentist within the previous 12 months and that those with untreated dental disease primarily live in families where there is no private dental coverage.

"The low use of sealants combined with a high number of cavities is not a coincidence," said Dr. Harry Goodman, director of the DHMH Office of Oral Health. "We like to see high rates of sealants placed on teeth because they do provide good protection."

The results from this survey are in line with the findings of the Dental Action Committee (DAC) convened by Secretary Colmers to develop a dental action plan after the untimely death in February 2007 of a 12-year-old Prince George's County child due to a dental infection. The DAC Report, which was released on September 11, contained many important recommendations aimed at achieving a dental home for Maryland's children.

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The *2005-06 School Survey* began in 2005 and concluded with the published results this year. It is the third in a series -- the first survey studied students' oral health status in the 1995-96 school year; the second was conducted in the 2000-01.

The project was coordinated by the University of Maryland, Baltimore, Dental School Department of Health Promotion and Policy. It was funded by the DHMH Office of Oral Health, and the federal Health Resources Services Administration State Oral Health Collaborative Systems.

The full survey and the Maryland Dental Action Committee Report are available online at www.fha.state.md.us/oralhealth/.

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