

MICHIGAN GKAS TALKING POINTS

The Extent of Untreated Oral Disease in Michigan's Children

- **Nearly 10% of Michigan third grade children have immediate dental care needs with signs or symptoms of pain, infection, or swelling.** Over 13% of parents of Michigan third graders reported their child had a toothache when biting or chewing in the past six months.
- **One in four (25%) Michigan third grade children have untreated dental decay.**
- Children lacking dental insurance and children of lower socioeconomic status were most likely to have immediate dental needs. Uninsured children are 2.5 times less likely to visit a dentist and 3 times more likely to have dental health needs as compared to children with public or private insurance.
- **Dental caries remains the single most chronic disease of childhood. Childhood dental decay is 5 times more common than childhood asthma and 7 times more common than hay fever.**
- Twenty-eight percent of children bear 75% of teeth affected by dental caries.
- Half of all parents who reported an inability to obtain dental care for their child cited a lack of dental insurance as a main reason; 15% of Michigan third graders lack dental insurance. Other barriers include: transportation barriers, inability to afford dental care, difficulty finding a dentist, inconvenient dental hours, and lack of understand about importance of seeking care.
- Dental caries and untreated decay in children is highest in the Upper Peninsula and Northern Lower Peninsula where water fluoridation is least available. Approximately 14,000 children in non-fluoridated communities participated in school-based weekly fluoride mouth rinse programs in 2004-05, a reduction from 2000-01 when 20,444 children participated. Water fluoridation, which effectively prevents dental caries, is available to 6.3 million Michigan residents, or about 2/3 of the population.

Impact of Untreated Oral Disease in Children

- Oral pain can impact a child's learning, nutrition, and sleeping. National data indicates acute dental pain accounts for the loss of 1.6 million school days for U.S. children per year, or more than three days for every 100 students.
- The loss of primary (baby) teeth to decay can impact the positioning of the permanent teeth, thus leading to substantial future dental impairments. Dental pain and early tooth loss can cause interfere with speech and eating. It can also cause a child to have difficulty paying attention in school and poor self-esteem.
- Severe oral infection can be extremely toxic and lead to poisoning of the bloodstream, fever, serious illness and even death.
- The evidence that oral health is strongly linked with systemic health continues to grow. Oral health conditions have been associated with heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, pregnancy complications and other conditions.
- Severe early childhood caries requires extensive dental work, including hospital inpatient stays, multiple tooth extractions, and anesthesia with costs from \$2,000 to \$6,000 per child.

Healthy Kids Dental Works!

- Michigan is fortunate to have an effective national model to address the access issue through the **Healthy Kids Dental** Medicaid program, which has been recognized nationally for its effectiveness. The Healthy Kids Dental (HKD) program has demonstrated that **substantial improvements can be**

made to improving access to dental care for the Medicaid-enrolled population, and therefore the oral health of these children. **Oral health must be viewed as an integral and necessary part of primary care.**

- **Substantially more Medicaid-enrolled children are receiving dental care under Healthy Kids Dental (200,000 children)**, compared with care under traditional Medicaid coverage. The most significant utilization increases are seen in children 4-10 years and children continuously enrolled in HKD for 12 months (44%).
- **More dentists in the 61 counties are providing care** to Medicaid-enrolled children under HKD, and **more children are receiving dental care** within their county of residence (an increase from 38% to 73%).
- Under HKD, Medicaid-enrolled **children are receiving needed restorative dental care**, as the backlog of needed dental care is being addressed. **More HKD children are entering regular recall**, compared with prior Medicaid-enrolled children.
- **Although tremendous improvements were made with the expansion of the Healthy Kids Dental program (now administered in 61 of Michigan's 83 counties), that still leaves 22 counties with severely limited access to dental care.** With the high incidence of oral disease throughout the state, Healthy Kids Dental is vital to the entire state.
- In Michigan fiscal year 2005, only 1% of the Medicaid health care expenditures went to dental services.

What We Believe

- **Oral health is integral to overall health.** Untreated oral disease is not just painful, it affects virtually every aspect of a child's physiological, emotional and social development. Kids with untreated dental decay can't eat or sleep properly; they can't concentrate in school; they can't smile.
- **Prevention is the ultimate solution.** Dental disease is almost entirely preventable. We need to say, "From this day forward, every child born in Michigan will see a dentist by her first birthday and at regular intervals thereafter. His parents or guardians will know how to care for his developing teeth from infancy. She will have access to fluoride and dental sealants." And if we were to take these simple, relatively inexpensive steps, we could effectively end children's dental disease in a few years. A good starting point is to expand the Healthy Kids Dental program.

Sources

- Michigan Department of Community Health, "Count Your Smiles", 2005-2006.
- Michigan Department of Community Health, "Burden of Oral Disease in Michigan", 2006.