

Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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Maryland's Senate Bill SB 590: Legislation for the Medicaid Program and Office of Oral Health

During the 1998 session of the Maryland General Assembly, Senate Bill SB 590 was passed to address the many oral health issues affecting children eligible for HealthChoice (Maryland's managed care Medicaid Program) and the Maryland Children's Health Insurance Program (MCHIP). The legislation was the result of advocacy and promotion of oral health policy by a dedicated partnership of State oral health entities committed to improving oral health access for Medicaid-eligible patients. SB 590 mandated:

- An increase in utilization of public dental services by placing under statutory authority oral health services utilization targets from 14% (in 1999) to 70% (2004) over a five-year period. As of 2010, the utilization rate has climbed to 63%. The 70% target is still in place and the data shows that utilization has continued to increase.
- Oral health services for pregnant women, a newly mandated benefit.
- Assessing the availability and accessibility of dentists throughout the State participating in HealthChoice/MCHIP and Medicaid Fee-for-Service and develop and implement strategies for increasing participation of dentists in these programs. SB 590 provided the foundation to establish the Dental Action Committee (DAC) in 2007 which provided seven recommendations including moving to a single statewide provider, increasing Medicaid dental reimbursement, and establishing a public health level dental hygienist. As a result of these successful efforts, the number of dentists in Maryland has increased by 400 in the past year, and that increase appears to be continuing, thus expanding availability and accessibility in Maryland.
- Placed under statutory authority the establishment of an Office of Oral Health and requested that this Office develop Demonstration Projects to increase access to and utilization of oral health services by underserved Medicaid beneficiaries. The Office of Oral Health at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has grown substantially in the past decade, now running several programs designed to support preventive services and increase access to care across the state. Two case management demonstration pilot programs were launched in Prince George's County and on the Eastern Shore. The program on the Eastern Shore continues to thrive and the option of applying for funding to hire two more case managers is currently being explored.
- Required that a statewide oral health needs assessment of Maryland schoolchildren be performed to assess oral health status and related issues such as access to preventive modalities and treatment services for children. The Survey of the Oral Health Status of Maryland School Children was conducted in 2005-2006, serving as a follow-up to surveys from prior years, a benchmark reference to assess OOH program progress, and a basis for an ongoing temporal oral health surveillance system. The 2011-2012 survey was completed in June 2012 and findings will be available in Fall 2012.

In tandem with these activities, both the Medicaid dental program and the Office of Oral Health received substantially increased funding. These were the first increases to the Medicaid dental program and the Office of Oral Health in many years. Access to oral health services for Medicaid-eligible children has continued to increase moderately and the funds for the Office of Oral Health have led to statewide education and preventive programs, a significant number of preventive oral health grant programs for local and community programs, and seven community water fluoridation start-ups.

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