



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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New Jersey Dental Sealant Survey

During the 2000-2001 school year, the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) made its first effort to assess the prevalence of dental sealants among the children in the state. The "Dental Sealant Survey 2001" was a collaborative effort between the DHSS and the regional Preventive Oral Health Education Programs. The purpose of the survey was to determine the percentage of third grade students with dental sealants on their permanent molar teeth. Using a take-home survey form for the parent/guardian, the survey asked if any dental sealants had been placed on the child's permanent molar teeth. The form included only one question that required checking the appropriate box as a response to the sealant question, "Does your child have a sealant on a back tooth?" The survey relied on the self-reporting by parents/guardians and their recall of whether sealants have been placed, instead of direct measurement through visual inspection. This approach was used due to time constraints and issues related to obtaining parental consent for screenings. A total of 3,790 surveys were distributed to students in the 46 schools and 2,237 surveys were returned, with a response rate of 59%. Since the "Dental Sealant Survey 2001" was completed anonymously, the non-responders were not known. Potential sources of bias include unknown bias due to non-returns, unknown bias of "don't know" responses, and the accuracy of parental recall on sealant placement. Approximately \$10,000 was provided by the New Jersey DHSS to conduct the survey during the 2000-2001 school year. The survey provided a baseline to monitor progress toward Healthy People 2010's objective to increase the proportion of children who have received dental sealants on their permanent molar teeth and to track one of the performance indicators of the Title V Maternal Child Health Block Grant.

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