

# Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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## North Carolina's Dental Sealant Initiative

The North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services, Division of Public Health, Oral Health Section, has a successful public/private collaboration with the North Carolina Dental Society, which includes the promotion of dental sealants. Many dentists open their private offices for sealant promotions. The sealant initiative unites the Section's expertise in dental health education/promotion and preventive services. It is designed to enable the state to provide an intervention that helps reduce tooth decay. This initiative has three parts.

1. **School-based sealant demonstration projects** are targeted to children, parents and personnel in the school setting. They are designed to educate children, parents and others in the community about the need for sealants and to encourage them to seek sealants from their private dentists. The projects are conducted by teams of public health dentists and dental hygienists. After an educational campaign involving all the children in the school, parents and community groups, a temporary "School Dental Office" is set up in the school where sealants are placed on eligible high-risk children at no cost to the participants. Between 1996 and 2009, the percent of North Carolina fifth graders with dental sealants increased from 28 percent to 44 percent.
2. Thirteen copies of our **interactive health promotion exhibit on sealants** are strategically placed across the state. These are used by dental public health staff in parent meetings, mall exhibitions and health fairs. These exhibits are targeted to middle income parents to encourage them to ask their family dentist about sealants for their child and to provide basic information about dental sealants. Annually, the exhibit is viewed by about 2,000 people.
3. **Sealant promotions in private offices** are a public/private partnership where privately practicing dentists use their facilities to place sealants on eligible children at no cost. Several models of the partnership exist. One public/private partnership model utilizes the resources of private dental offices and staff with a specific number of appointment slots for children. The appointment slots are filled with eligible children identified by public health staff. Another public/private partnership model uses the private office facility or community college dental clinics where sealants are placed by private practitioners, dental hygiene and dental assisting students and public health practitioners working side-by-side for a designated number of days. The North Carolina Oral Health Section web site provides contact information for NCOHS staff at <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dph/oralhealth/>.

### Lessons Learned:

This program makes a difference because it provides sealants to high risk children who otherwise may not receive this preventive procedure.

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