



January 2017

Dear VSDS Member Dentists,

One of the priorities listed in the VSDS' **Care Beyond the Chair** Campaign is the **Tooth Tutor Program**; this program evolved over time to become **Vermont's School-linked Sealant Program**, the only one of its kind in the country. Other state oral health programs participate in school-based sealant programs, but Tooth Tutor hygienists in Vermont work to connect students to local dental homes where they can receive comprehensive dental care, with a focus on sealants.

Currently, there are approximately 35 Tooth Tutors working in over 100 schools and all seven Head Start programs across Vermont. In the last school year the program surpassed its goal for the percentage of students in the target group who accessed dental care through the program and who received at least one sealant. While there is still room for improvement, this shows that the program is on the right track towards improving the oral health of Vermont's children.

Due to the fact, that most Tooth Tutor hygienists are not placing sealants in schools themselves, they need to contact dental offices to obtain sealant data. Therefore, again this year, Tooth Tutors will be contacting practices throughout Vermont to collect the needed data. As a membership focused on improving overall oral health your cooperation is needed.

You will be asked to provide the following data:

- The total number of students referred to your office through the Tooth Tutor program.
- The total number of first molars sealed.
- The total number of second molars sealed.

VSDS asks that you work with your local Tooth Tutor (if you have one) to establish a data collection method. If you need assistance with the data collection process or have questions or concerns, please contact Debora Teixeira, the Program Coordinator at 802-652-4115 or email her at Debora.teixeira@vermont.gov.

Thank you in advance for your support. Attached to this message, you will find a report issued by the Vermont Department of Health, about *Dental Sealants in Vermont*.

Vaughn T. Collins
Executive Director

Why focus on dental sealants?

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease among American children. Sealants are effective in caries prevention and sealants can prevent the progression of early non-cavitated carious lesions, as noted by an expert panel convened by the American Dental Association Council on Scientific Affairs (ADA, 2008). The National Governors' Association report, *Health investments that pay off: Strategies to improve oral health*, lists dental sealant delivery programs as one of three evidence-based, safe, effective, and economical interventions to improve statewide oral health outcomes (NGA, 2015). The Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends school-based sealant delivery programs based on strong evidence of effectiveness in preventing dental caries (tooth decay) among children (CPSTF, 2016).

What are the data telling us?

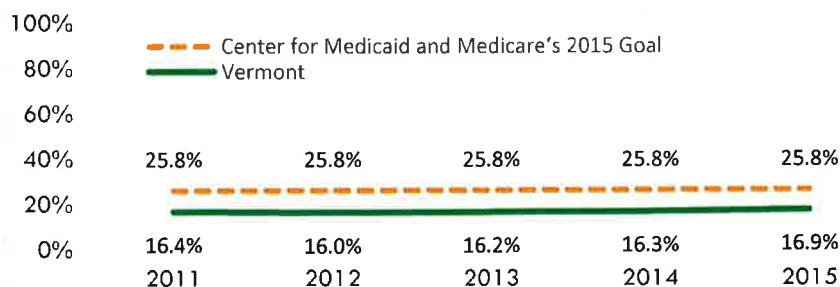
1. **Dental screening data from the 2013-2014 oral health survey of Vermont's children (all third grade children that participated in the survey) found:**

- Almost 50 percent of third grade children (approximately 8-9 years old) in Vermont do not have dental sealants. Sealants are usually placed at approximately 6 years of age.
- Since 2002-2003, there has been a 14 percentage point decrease in sealant rates.
- There are significant oral health disparities in Vermont with low-income children and minority children having the highest level of tooth decay and the lowest level of dental sealants.

2. **Claims Data from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid 416 reports (6-9 Year olds who are enrolled in Medicaid):**

In 2010, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) asked states to develop a plan to increase dental sealant rates over a five year span. The percent of 6-9 year-old Medicaid enrolled children that receive sealants has remained approximately 16-17 percent in Vermont since 2011.

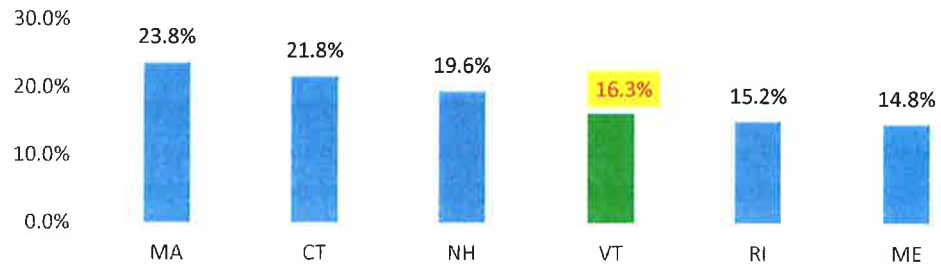
Percent of 6-9 Year-old Medicaid-Enrolled Children in Vermont who Received Sealants and the CMS Goal (FFY 2011-2015)



Data source: Vermont's Medicaid Claims

Vermont ranks 4th amongst New England states in regard to the percentage of 6–9 year-old Medicaid enrolled children that received a sealant in FFY 2014.

Percent of 6–9 Year-old Medicaid-Enrolled Children in New England States who Received Sealants in FFY 2014
Source: CMS 416 Reports



3. Reimbursement Data

Vermont ranks 2nd in regard to the amount reimbursed by Medicaid for dental sealants.

2016 Medicaid Reimbursement Rates for Dental Sealants in New England States
Source: State Medicaid agencies



Vermont Department of Health and the Department of Vermont Health Access efforts to promote dental sealants in Vermont

- We have changed the focus of the Tooth Tutor Dental Access program to prioritize dental sealants; it is now referred to as the Tooth Tutor School-Linked Dental Sealant program. By collecting data on the number of children referred through the program that receive dental sealants, we are able to evaluate the program based on its intended outcome of increasing the number of Vermont children insured by Medicaid that get sealants.
- We are informing parents and caregivers of children enrolled in Medicaid of the importance of preventive sealants.
- We are making it easier for dental hygienists to place sealants in public health settings. Dental hygienists who have a collaborative practice agreement with a dentist can now enroll as Medicaid providers, allowing them to place dental sealants in public health settings and be reimbursed by Medicaid directly.

- We are meeting with the Vermont dental community to identify and address barriers to placing dental sealants in dental practices.
- We are collaborating with community partners including the University of Vermont Medical Center's Community Health Improvement Program to pilot school-based (vs. school-linked) dental sealant programs in Vermont. In school based programs, sealants are placed on children in the school setting; school-linked programs work to link children to local dental practices where they may get sealants.

Thank you in advance for sharing your ideas about how we can work together to improve our dental sealant rates in Vermont.

References

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