



## **Vermont has a lot to smile about.**

According to the National Survey of Children's Health, Vermont has one of the highest percentages of children receiving dental care and Vermont is ranked in the top 5 for healthiest states in the U.S. according to the United Health Foundation. We're healthy and happy and that's a lot to be proud of.

## **However, we can do even more to improve Vermont's oral health.**

*That's why Vermont community dentists are committed to strengthening our system of care.*

Let's work  
together to ensure  
Vermonters receive  
safe, high-quality  
dental care at a cost  
they can afford!



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# **VERMONT ACTION FOR DENTAL HEALTH**

Together Improving  
Vermont's Oral Health



Vermont State  
Dental Society

## Expanding the Tooth Tutor Program

Children with tooth decay (which is preventable) are much more likely to suffer from dental disease throughout their lives. The Tooth Tutor program ensures children have access to oral healthcare. Since 1993, it has expanded from elementary schools to preschool and middle/high schools. However, some schools still do not participate and 26,000 eligible kids did not see a dentist in 2013. The Legislature should provide incentives for every school district to implement this valuable oral health program for children.

## Advocating for Community Water Fluoridation

Fluoride is a natural mineral scientifically-proven to safely prevent tooth decay. The average lifetime cost per person to fluoridate public water is less than the cost of filling a cavity. One dollar invested in water fluoridation saves \$38 in dental treatment costs, yet only about half of Vermont benefits from fluoride. VSIDS will continue to encourage communities to take advantage of the proven health benefits and cost savings of fluoride, and would like to work with the legislature on this important public health issue.

## Adding Community-Based Hygienists

The Vermont Department of Health works with dental hygienists to provide services and



referrals to dentists in about half of its district offices. They help underserved Vermonters achieve oral health during pregnancy and the critically important early childhood years. Vermont should put a dental health hygienist in every district office to serve WIC recipients, pediatric care offices, childcare centers, schools and community organizations.

## Reducing Emergency Room Visits

Most emergency rooms (ERs) are not equipped to provide dental treatment. Moving patients out of the ER and into a dentist's chair lowers costs, reduces ER wait times and ensures patients receive the right care in the right setting. Vermont dentists are ready to work with Vermont's hospitals and the Legislature to identify the best ways to substantially reduce the use of emergency rooms for non-emergency dental care.

## Strengthening Medicaid for Oral Health

The Vermont Medicaid program is critically important, but is at risk of collapsing under the weight of its own costs. The program reimburses healthcare providers for about half of what it costs to deliver the care. The Legislature needs to reform Medicaid, more effectively manage eligibility, and cover a larger share of the cost. Vermont's dentists recommend that the Legislature create a non-partisan, expert commission to conduct a comprehensive study to determine how to meet these critically important goals.

## Increasing Community Dental Health Coordinators

Community Dental Health Coordinators (CDHC) serve as dental social workers that teach dental hygiene to individuals in our communities and help patients keep scheduled appointments. The VSIDS will work to educate community leaders, healthcare providers and social service organizations about the value of the coordinators, with the goal of statewide adoption.

