

Office of Oral Health

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About

The Office of Oral Health (OOH) promotes the oral health of Connecticut residents and the reduction of disease and health disparities to ensure the public's overall health and well-being.

Vision

Our vision is to provide leadership and expertise in dental public health and maintain a strong and sustainable infrastructure to support essential public health activities related to oral health. Oral health is an integral component to the general health and well-being of all Connecticut residents.

Oral Health Prevention in Connecticut

Connecticut has several ongoing programs and practices to prevent oral disease, including:

- School-based dental sealant programs
- Community water fluoridation
- Oral health surveillance
- Medical-dental integration

School-based Dental Sealant Programs



Dental sealants are thin coatings placed on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. They can prevent 60% of decay for a fraction of the cost of a filling. Children ages 6-11 without dental sealants have almost three times more cavities in their first molars than those with sealants.

The goal of the SEAL CT! Program is to increase by 5% the number of schools with a dental sealant program at schools where 50% or more students are eligible for the Free and Reduced Meal Program. The program also aims to increase by 5% the number of children who receive at least one or more dental sealant on a permanent molar. The program is expected to reach a 6-year target of expanding the SEAL CT! program to 128 schools by 2024.

KEY POINTS:

- **28%** of surveyed third grade children have dental sealants, exceeding the Healthy People 2020 objective (ESC 2022)
- **73.2%** of CT adults visited a dentist of dental clinic in the last year (BRFSS 2020)
- **\$20** saved in dental care costs for every \$1 spent on community water fluoridation and as much as **\$11** saved for every dental sealant placed (CDC 2020)

Community Water Fluoridation

Community water fluoridation, considered one of the top ten public health achievements of the 20th century, has significantly contributed to tooth decay decline over the past 70 years. In February 1965, Connecticut was the first state to pass a state statute requiring water fluoridation in public water systems serving 20,000 or more people. As of 2021, approximately 2.46 million residents, or 90% of Connecticut's public water systems, receive optimally fluoridated water. The OOH collaborates with the Connecticut DPH Drinking Water Section to maintain the state statute, ensure the delivery of optimally fluoridated water, educate stakeholders on the safety and benefits, and report data to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



Oral Health Surveillance

The Connecticut Oral Health Surveillance System (COHSS) identifies and detects disease to inform policy, educate the public, and guide oral health plans and evaluation activities by monitoring and updating data from 13 state-level data sources. The COHSS data provide the foundation for the State Oral Health Improvement Plan, which aims to improve the oral health of Connecticut residents through four focus areas: 1) prevention, 2) access and utilization 3), medical and dental integration, and 4) data collection and analysis. Every five years, the OOH conducts an Every Smile Counts (ESC) survey to monitor the oral health status and treatment needs of Connecticut's kindergarten and third grade children. The fourth ESC, conducted in 2021, sampled 46 elementary schools in 37 school districts, and 4,642 children were surveyed for oral and body mass index indicators. The final report is available [here](#). Lastly, the 2022 Every Smile Counts survey for Older Adults, conducted to assess the oral health of vulnerable adults at long-term care facilities and congregate meal sites, concluded in November 2022. This report is expected to be available in the Spring of 2023.



Medical-Dental Integration

In 2018, the OOH received funding from CDC and HRSA to implement its first innovative Medical Dental Integration Project (MDIP) to address the connection between oral health and chronic diseases, specifically childhood obesity and adult prediabetes. The project has four main goals: 1) train medical and dental providers on motivational interviewing; 2) conduct a nutrition screening on pediatric patients; 3) conduct a prediabetes screening on adult patients; and 4) establish bidirectional referrals between medical and dental. This project will conclude in August 2024. In September 2022, the OOH received funding from HRSA to implement a Mobile Medical Dental Integration project (MMDI) to increase access and reduce barriers to oral health services and COVID-19 vaccination and testing in dental health professional shortage areas (DHPsAs) by utilizing mobile dental vehicles (MDVs). The office will also develop and execute a statewide media campaign to promote the safety and importance of preventive dental care and COVID-19 vaccination, as well as a social media campaign to promote the utilization of MDVs in targeted DPHSAs.

For more information, visit the Office of Oral Health website at portal.ct.gov/DPH. Key word: oral health