**Sealant Program Improves Health Outcomes and
Reduces State Health Expenditures in 2007/2008**

The Need for the Sealant Program

Children participating in the Dental Sealant Program are 50% more likely to have untreated decay in a permanent or baby tooth than the average U.S. child of similar age. Among children in the Sealant Program

- 65% have experienced dental decay[1] while 39% currently have unmet dental treatment needs.[2]
- Among children with untreated disease, almost one third are in urgent need of dental care because of pain or infection.[3] Pain and suffering resulting from dental decay can lead to problems in eating, speaking, and attending to learning.

Addressing the Need

About 90% of decay in children's permanent teeth occurs on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. Sealants serve as a physical barrier to the bacteria that cause decay and thus are 100% effective if they are fully retained. If sealants are lost, they are most likely to be lost within the first year of application. The Sealant Program delivered sealants to 5,000 children during the 2007–2008 school year[4] and available data indicate the first-year retention rate exceeded 90%.[5] It is estimated that the Sealant Program saved 1.1 molars from decay per child sealed.[6]

In addition to placing sealants, the Sealant Program

- Referred 3,261 children for dental care.[7]
- Delivered fluoride treatments to 3,304 children.[8]
- Provided oral health education to 11,256 children.[9]

A Good Investment

It cost the Sealant Program $25.31 to deliver these screening, preventive, and referral services to one child.[10] Taking into account Medicaid reimbursement for sealants, the state spent approximately $58.03[11] to seal four permanent first molars per child.[12] These amounts are less than the cost of dental treatment that would have resulted without the Sealant Program.

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[1] This value can be obtained from #4 under "Summary of effectiveness in targeting high-risk populations that lack access to care" in the program-level report generated by SEALS.
[2] From #1 under the same heading
[3] From #2 under the same heading
[4] From #3 under "Summary of services delivered"
[5] From #6 under "Summary of quality of services delivered"
[6] From #7 & 8 under the same heading
[7] From #9 under "Summary of services delivered"
[8] From #7 & #8 under the same heading
[9] From #10 under the same heading
[10] From #2 under "Summary of efficiency of input usage"
[11] From #3 under "Summary of efficiency of input usage"
[12] From #6 under "Summary of services delivered"