

**Alex Haartz, MPH
Administrator**

**Bradford Lee, M.D.
State Health Officer**



**Contact Name: Martha Framsted
Phone Number: 775-684-4014
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NEVADA STATE HEALTH DIVISION NEWS RELEASE

Nevada Children Getting More Preventive Oral Health Services

Carson City – A recent screening of children enrolled in Nevada’s schools shows that the percent of children with protective dental sealants on their teeth has improved dramatically. Every three years the Nevada State Health Division’s Bureau of Family Health Services conducts a screening of children enrolled in third grade. The latest screening found that the percent of children with dental sealants increased from 33 percent in 2003 to 49 percent in 2006.

Dental sealants are a plastic material painted on the chewing surfaces of teeth where up to 90 percent of tooth decay occurs in school children. Dental sealants have been shown to reduce cavities by up to 70 percent. School-based dental sealant programs are one of only two proven public health approaches to reducing dental cavities.

“I am thrilled to see that more Nevada children are getting the preventive oral health services they need,” says Christine Wood, Oral Health Program Manager for the Bureau of Family Health Services. “There are over 200,000 children enrolled in kindergarten through sixth grade in Nevada. Historically, over 67 percent of these children have experienced tooth decay. If we can reduce tooth decay in these children by 70 percent we will not only save significant amounts of money but we will have children who are better able to learn and who can perform more effectively in all areas of their lives. We know tooth decay in children can cause failure to thrive, impaired speech development, absence from and inability to concentrate in school and reduced self esteem. Children with tooth decay grow up to be adults who suffer from tooth decay and dental disease in adults has been linked to pre-term/low birth weight babies, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and respiratory infection. Nevada is now in the top ten when it comes to sealants on children’s teeth. This is a major accomplishment.”

Non-profit school-based dental sealant programs that target schools with a high percent of children who are eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program are supported by grants from the Fund for a Healthy Nevada (tobacco settlement dollars), the Health Resources and Services Administration, and donations from private funders. The Health Division is able to provide technical support to these programs through grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant.

For more information about oral health or school-based dental sealant programs, please contact Christine Wood, Bureau of Family Health Services, 775-684-5953.

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Alex Haartz, Administrator

505 E. King Street, Room 201, Carson City, Nevada 89701-4797
Phone (775) 684-4200, Fax (775) 684-4211
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