

Sealants for Smiles Fact Sheet

We are a charitable organization providing school-based oral health education and dental sealants to underserved children.

It has been said that “A child’s smile is one of life’s greatest blessings.” A child’s smile makes us smile, makes us laugh. It is has no language or racial barriers. It happens in a flash but its memory lasts a lifetime. One of the greatest threats to a child’s smile is dental decay. For lower income families, the barriers to obtain even the basic dental care are real and daunting.

Need

Although tooth decay is largely preventable, it remains the most common chronic disease of childhood in Utah and the nation. It is particularly prevalent among low-income and ethnic populations, those most likely to have restricted access to prevention and treatment services. Oral health is integral to the overall health of children and adults. Untreated dental decay can lead to chronic pain, fever, poor nutrition, poor school performance, low self-esteem, costly emergency care, and permanent disabilities.



Dental sealants are a clear plastic material applied to the pits and fissures of the chewing surfaces of teeth, where up to 90% of decay occurs in children. Sealants prevent tooth decay by creating a barrier between the teeth and decay-causing bacteria. Sealants are 100% effective if they are fully retained on the tooth thereby preventing the need for expensive fillings. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) strongly recommends school-based dental sealant programs as an effective strategy to prevent tooth decay.

Program Structure and Services

Sealants for Smiles is the only school-based dental sealant program in Utah. We provide oral health education and application of dental sealants to underserved Utah children. The program serves second and sixth grade children in Title I and low income schools, where more than 45% of children are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The program provides the following services:



1. **Oral hygiene education for children.** All 2nd and 6th grade students participate in a 30 minute presentation that covers nutrition, brushing, flossing, and sealants. The presentation utilizes age appropriate props to engage the children.



2. **Oral hygiene kit.** Each child receives a free toothbrush, toothpaste, floss and information about preventative dental care.
3. **Oral health screening.** A licensed Utah dentist examines those eligible participants who return affirmative permission slips, determines the oral health status of the child and indicates which teeth to be sealed.

4. **Dental sealants.** The Sealants for Smiles hygienists follow guidelines established by the CDC for sealant application.
5. **Children with immediate dental needs are referred to low-cost or no-cost dental care.** Parents of children who are identified as needing additional dental care are provided with information about low-cost or no-cost dental clinics. Principals of the elementary schools and local health department personnel are also provided with a list of children with dental needs.

Portable dental units including 3 dental chairs, suction and compressed air are set up in participating elementary schools by the Utah Department of Health. The school-based Sealants for Smiles clinics are operated by a team of contracted Registered Dental Hygienists working under the general supervision of Roger J. Adams DMD, MS, an Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon licensed in Utah since 1983 and the Utah State Dental Director, Steven Steed DDS. CDC school-based dental sealant guidelines and OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens requirements are strictly followed.



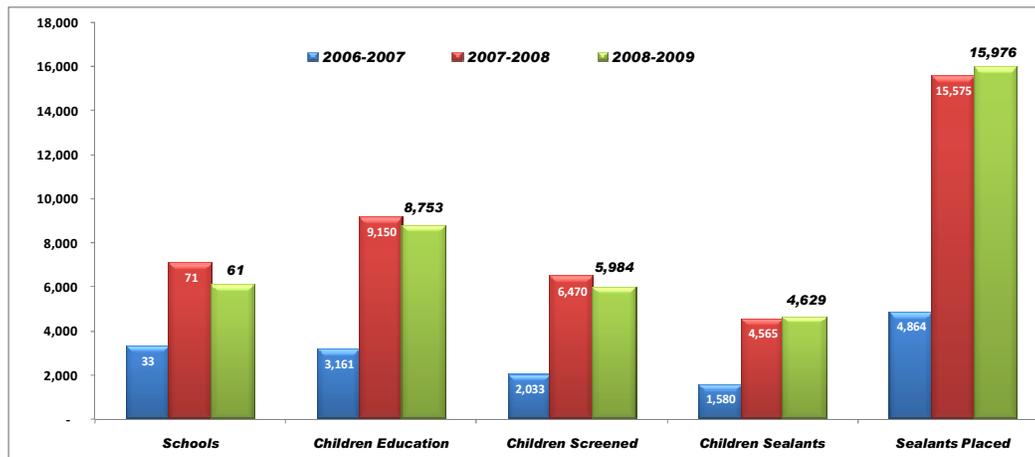
2nd and 6th grade teachers are responsible for obtaining health information and parental permission from the parents. Only children who have completed health information and parental permission forms are eligible to be seen in the school-based clinic. A Sealants for Smiles proprietary .net practice management has been developed wherein laptops with wireless cards are used to record all patient information including oral health assessment, teeth with visible evidence of decay, teeth eligible for

sealant placement (following the CDC guidelines) and teeth receiving sealants. **No other dental services are provided.** All patient forms are scanned and attached to the patient record.



A report listing all of the children seen in the clinic and their respective dental need is provided to the principals of the elementary schools and those designated by the principal to provide follow-up on children with urgent dental needs, ie, school nurses, social workers, community health departments, etc. Parents are provided a summary of the oral health assessment and a list of free and reduced fee dental resources for follow-up care.

In its first year (July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008) Sealants for Smiles **increased the services** provided to low-income children by more than **300%** from the previous year (refer to graph). The H1N1 Swine Flu outbreak in the Spring of 2009 resulted in cancelations of 10 school-based sealant clinics. Despite going to 10 fewer schools, **Sealants for Smiles hygienists placed 16,975 dental sealants during the 2008-2009 school-year, exceeding the previous year total.**



This year we evaluated 29.3% of the sealants placed on 2nd graders the previous year. **Only 3% of these children had evidence of dental decay** in the sealed teeth as compared to dental decay found in **60-70%** of children with similar demographics and age.