

Georgia Oral Health Program (GOHP)



What is the purpose of the program? To prevent oral disease among Georgians

What does the program do?

- Public health dental hygienists and dentists provide preventive dental health services to children in school-based programs, including fluoride rinses and varnish, dental sealants, dental health education and screenings.
- Provides clinical dental services to children and adults who do not have access to a private provider or a community health center with a dentist.
- Provides training to public health nutritionists in promoting prevention of early childhood caries (baby bottle tooth decay), and train Public Health and School nurses oral disease, injuries, and screening.
- Promotes the use of fluoridated water through education about the benefits of fluoridation, and provides monitoring and surveillance of community water fluoridation programs

How many people are helped by the program?

95.8 % of Georgians using public water systems are now receiving optimally fluoridated water (about 9 million people). In FY2008, 190,839 children received dental prevention and treatment services provided by health department dental clinics and program visits to schools and other child-care facilities in the 18 health districts.

Why is the program important?

The U.S. Surgeon General reports that dental decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood, and that 51 million hours of school/year are lost due to dental disease. Children from low-income families are 12-times more likely to miss school because of dental problems than their wealthier classmates. The GOHP provides Georgia's low-income children with access to oral health prevention and treatment services through school-based programs and public health centers. Preventive dental services reduce serious and costly dental problems. Every dollar invested in preventive dental care saves as much as \$147 in future expenses (California Dental Association).

Who is eligible?

- Children in Head Start and children in schools where more than 50% of the students are eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program are eligible for our school-based prevention programs.
- Children up to 285% of the federal poverty level are eligible for clinical services such as dental sealants and dental treatment services on a sliding-fee scale.
- Pregnant women receiving Medicaid. Studies indicate that women receiving dental care before or during their pregnancy had an almost 50% lower risk of giving birth to a premature or low-birth weight child.
- Georgia citizens who use community water systems.

Where are services located?

Georgia Oral Health Prevention Programs (GOHPP) are located in all of the 18 health districts. Georgia's low-income children receive prevention and treatment services through the use of portable dental equipment (1-2 in each health district) or mobile dental trailers and vans (14 mobiles in 11 health districts).

Optimally fluoridated water is available to Georgia's population served by community water systems statewide.

Outcome Measures

- Increase the number of Georgians served by fluoridated community water systems with optimal levels of fluoride.
- Increase the proportion of eligible low-income elementary school children who receive protective sealants on the biting (chewing) surfaces of permanent molar teeth.
- Increase the proportion of low-income elementary school children who are free of active oral disease and oral disease-related pain.
- Increase the number of high-risk children receiving OH screenings and fluoride varnish starting at age 6 months.
- Increase the number of pregnant women receiving dental services.

Contact: Carol Smith, RDH, MSHA (404) 463-4449

E-mail: cjsmith2@dhr.state.ga.us

<http://health.state.ga.us/programs/oral/>