



ORAL HEALTH COALITION OF ALABAMA

To ensure every child in Alabama enjoys optimal health by providing equal and timely access to quality, comprehensive oral health care, where prevention is emphasized, promoting the total well-being of the child.



- Alabama Office of Governor
- Alabama Legislature
- Alabama Extension Service
- Alabama Medicaid Agency
- Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Department of Children's Affairs
- Department of Education
- Department of Human Resources
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Public Health
- UAB School of Dentistry
- Alabama Academy of Family Physicians
- Alabama Academy of Pediatrics
- Alabama Arise
- Alabama Association of School Nurses
- Alabama Dental Association
- Alabama Dental Society
- Alabama Hospital Association
- Alabama Pediatric Dental Association
- Alabama Primary Health Care Association
- Alabama State Medical Association
- Alabama Power
A Southern Company
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama
- Business Council of Alabama
- Consumer Representatives
- Faith Based Associations
- Focal
- Head Start
- Medical Association of the State of Alabama
- Medicaid Dental Task Force
- VOICES

FACT SHEET

Good oral health prevents pain, suffering, missed days of school or work and unnecessary costs due to dental treatment.

WHY IS GOOD ORAL HEALTH IMPORTANT?

- Dental related illness causes poor children to “miss” 12 times more school days than children from higher income families.¹
- Poor oral health has been associated with other medical problems including heart disease and premature births.²

IS THERE AN ORAL HEALTH PROBLEM IN ALABAMA?

- Two out of every five Alabama schoolchildren are estimated to have untreated tooth decay.³
- Almost 70 percent of low-income children in Alabama did not visit a dentist last year.⁴
- Alabama has about 30 percent fewer dentists statewide than the nation (38 dentists in Alabama versus 54 per 100,000 population nationally) and our dentists are not distributed evenly.⁵
- One-third of all Alabamians over age 65 have no teeth, the 9th highest percentage in the country.⁶

HOW DO WE RANK?

- Alabama is the 4th lowest in the nation in terms of per person spending for dental care.⁷
- 141 persons die from mouth and throat cancer in Alabama each year (8th highest in the nation) and approximately 550 persons in the state will be diagnosed with this cancer each year.⁸
- Only 34 percent of low-income adults in Alabama visited a dentist in the past year compared to 46 percent of low-income adults nationally.⁹
- Only 48 percent of Alabamians over age 65 visited a dentist in the past year compared to 62 percent of persons nationally.¹⁰

Healthy Smiles, Healthy Children

References

- ¹ Centers for Disease Control, Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, “Chronic Disease Prevention Effectiveness Fact Sheet, 2002.”
- ² Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Public Health Service, *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General*, page 2.
- ³ Centers for Disease Control, *Behavioral Risk Factor Survey*, 1999.
- ⁴ Alabama Medicaid Agency, Claims Data, Fiscal Year 2002.
- ⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA), *Health Resources and Services Administration Workforce Study*.
- ⁶ Centers for Disease Control, *Behavioral Risk Factor Survey*, 1999.
- ⁷ Morgan Quitno (MQ) Press using data from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, “State Health Care Expenditures.”
- ⁸ Alabama Department of Public Health, “Dental Disease Prevalence in Alabama School-aged Children,” *Journal of the Alabama Dental Association*. Vol. 75: 1991, 18-31.
- ⁹ Centers for Disease Control, *Behavioral Risk Factor Survey*, 1999.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.