



Hearing date:
Wednesday,
February 29,
2012; 9:15 a.m.
Senate Ways and
Means Committee

To: Senator David Ige, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

From: Elisabeth Chun, Executive Director
Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Wednesday, February 29, 2012, 9:15 am
Conference Room 211

Subject: **SB 2605 SD1: Oral Health; Dentists; Public Schools; Medicaid; Appropriations**

The Good Beginnings Alliance is a policy and advocacy organization focused on Hawaii's youngest children and their families. We strive to ensure a nurturing, safe and healthy development for all children from pre-birth to age eight. The following information is provided to help you in your decision-making process:

- Hawaii was rated as the worst overall performer among the 50 states and the District of Columbia by the Pew Center on the States in its 2011 "The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Matter."
- More than half of Hawaii's children on Medicaid received no dental service in 2009.
- Hawaii is 1 of only 8 states and the District of Columbia that does not submit basic screening data to the National Oral Health Surveillance System.
 - The ability to collect data is a key element of an effective state dental health program.
- Untreated tooth decay can cause serious illness and death.
 - In 2007, a 12-year old boy named Deamonte Driver from Maryland died from a brain infection caused by bacteria from tooth decay.
- Tooth decay is the single most common chronic childhood disease -- five times more common than asthma and seven times more common than hay fever.
- Research shows children who lack basic dental care miss more days of school and see their overall health suffer..

We must recognize that our children's oral health is extremely important to ensure all of our keiki are safe, healthy, and ready to succeed. Mahalo for your consideration and your support. For more information contact: Good Beginnings Alliance; phone: 531-5502; lchun@goodbeginnings.org

The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Matter

Hawaii

F

2011 GRADE

Hawaii meets only one of the eight policy benchmarks aimed at improving children's dental health, making it the worst overall performer among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Hawaii does not fully use proven preventive strategies: It lacks a school sealant program and has the lowest rate of fluoridation of any state. Residents living on military bases are the only ones who receive fluoridated water.¹

The Aloha State's silver lining is Medicaid utilization—over 45 percent of enrolled children received dental services in 2009.

HOW WELL IS HAWAII RESPONDING?

2011: **F**

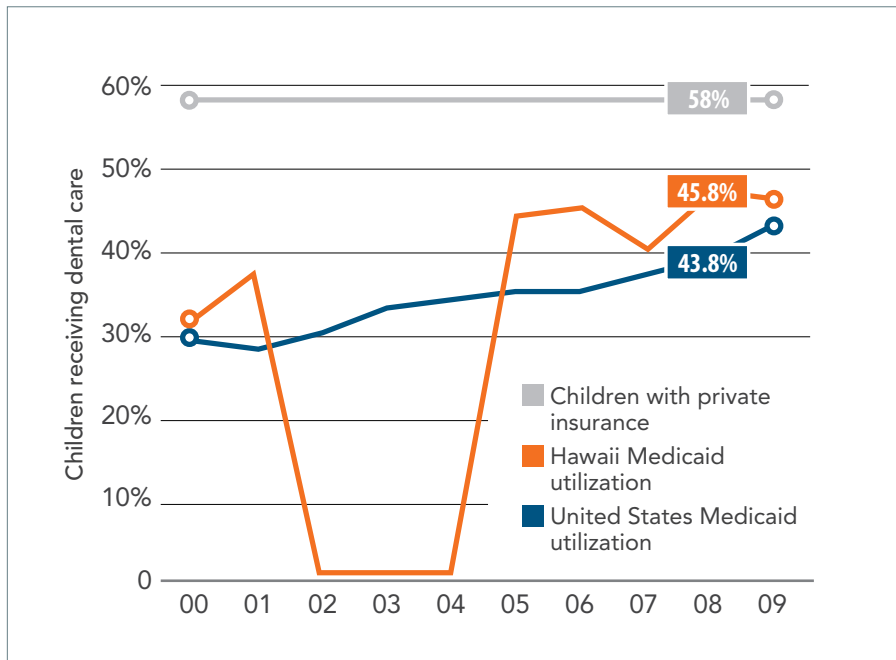
2010: **F**

DATA YEAR	MEASURED AGAINST THE NATIONAL BENCHMARKS FOR EIGHT POLICY APPROACHES	STATE	NATIONAL	MEETS OR EXCEEDS	MET OR EXCEEDED
2010	Share of high-risk schools with sealant programs	0%	25%		
2010	Hygienists can place sealants without dentist's prior exam	NO	YES		✓
2008	Share of residents on fluoridated community water supplies	10.8%	75%		
2009	Share of Medicaid-enrolled children getting dental care	45.8%	38.1%	✓	✓
2010	Share of dentists' median retail fees reimbursed by Medicaid	37.7%	60.5%		
2010	Pays medical providers for early preventive dental health care	NO	YES		
2010	Authorizes new primary care dental providers	NO	YES		
2010	Tracks data on children's dental health	NO	YES		
Total score				1 of 8	2 of 8

Grading: A = 6-8 points B = 5 points C = 4 points D = 3 points F = 0-2 points

HOW BAD IS THE PROBLEM?

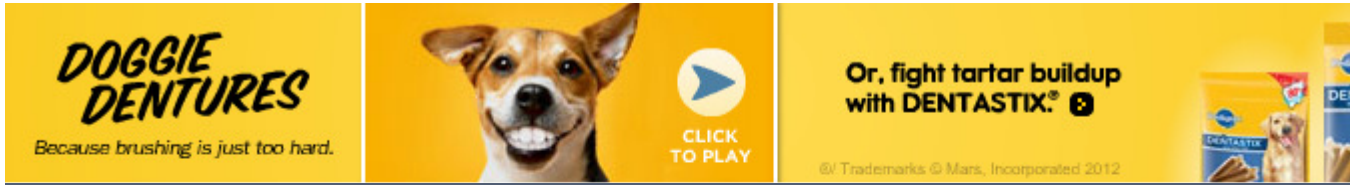
Too many children lack access to dental care, with severe outcomes. One measure of the problem: more than half of the children on Medicaid received no dental service in 2009.



SOURCE: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS-416. Hawaii submitted data in 2002, 2003 and 2004 that appear to be abnormally low, indicating possible problems with the submission. Please, use caution when interpreting the data in question for these years.

SOURCES FOR BENCHMARKS: (1, 2, 7) Pew Center on the States survey of states; (3) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; (4) Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS-416; (5, 6) Medicaid/SCHIP Dental Association and American Academy of Pediatrics; (8) National Oral Health Surveillance System.

1. D. Easa, et al., "Addressing Oral Health Disparities in Settings Without a Research-Intensive Dental School: Collaborative Strategies," *Ethnicity and Disease* 15, (2005): 187-190. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1371063/>, (accessed February 24, 2011).

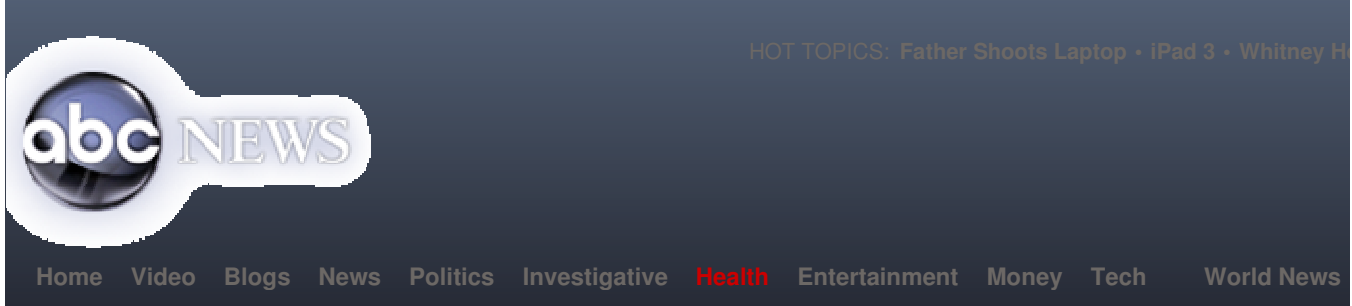


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Toothache Leads to Boy's Death



By LAURA OWINGS
March 5, 2007

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A simple toothache can be fatal.

125

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That is the sobering message a 12-year-old Maryland boy left when, after his dental problems went untreated, he succumbed to a severe brain infection.

Deamonte Driver's life could have been spared if his infected tooth was simply removed -- a procedure costing just \$80.

However, the Driver family faced obstacles with Medicaid, poverty, and access to resources, resulting in an easily preventable health problem turning deadly.

In the end, Driver endured two surgeries and weeks of hospital care totaling about \$250,000 in medical bills.

Sadly, it was too late to save the boy, and he passed away on Feb. 25.

But Deamonte Driver has become much more than just a tragic death. His story underscores the growing need in this wealthy nation to provide adequate dental care to our nation's children.

Children without Dental Care

"Unfortunately, this is more common than we'd like it to be," says Sally Cram, a practicing periodontist in the Washington, DC area. "A lot of children don't get dental care."

In fact, data from the Centers for Disease Control cites tooth decay as one of the most common chronic infectious diseases among U.S. children.

By the age of 11, approximately half of children have decay, and by the age of 19, tooth decay in the permanent teeth affects about 68 percent of adolescents.

For children in low-income families, like the Drivers, there is nearly twice the risk for untreated tooth decay.

"Among children, dental services are the most needed service that they do not receive," says Judith Lave, chair of the Department of Health Policy and Management at the University of Pittsburg, PA.

"I think it is probably the least covered of our health benefits across the nation," she adds.

Hurdles in Getting Dental Care

While this lack of care is a known problem, there are a number of issues that stand in the way.

"The dentist doesn't break even," says Cram.

In fact, experts say the low rates Medicaid offers to cover dental services are less than what it costs the doctor to do the actual treatment.

Additionally, state Medicaid programs provide less than satisfactory resources for patients seeking dental care.

1 Tip to Lose Stomach Fat

This unusual article shows 3 veggies that fight stomach fat.

TruthAboutStomachFat.com

It often happens that "you have the benefits, and can't find a dentist to give you care," says Lave.

In Cram's experience, when she and the D.C. Dental Society sought out the names of dentists providing to Medicaid patients, "they couldn't provide the resources to us.

"How can they provide it to patients?" she asks.

The problem with care extends further than bureaucracy, however.

"I think that, for the general public, dental care is lower down on their list of important issues," says Lave.

Case for Prevention

People seem to think "teeth are not a big deal," says Cram.

But it's not just about your mouth. "Infections in your teeth and mouth can lead to more problems," she points out.

When a cavity goes untreated for months or years, the decay eats into the center of the tooth, and eventually enters the nerves and blood vessels.

From there, bacteria get into the blood stream and can travel virtually anywhere.

By taking advantage of basic preventative services -- like cleanings and filling cavities -- people can drastically reduce their chances for severe dental disease.

And with the benefit of Medicaid funding, a tremendous amount of budget funds could be saved in the long run.

Across the board, education on the benefits of prevention is the most important that can be done.

"It's sad that a child has to die for people to wake up," says Cram. "We need to stop putting our heads in the sand and start working together -- it takes education to help."

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blablalblahhh

7:59 PM EDT
Sep 04, 2011

mdaahj: spoken like someone who has never had children and then LOST a job and couldn't afford what you could when the children were born. Spoken like someone who has not had a child with such severe health issues that you had to quite to care for them. Spoken like someone who doesn't have to take two days off of work every week for a child who has seizure. And when you get sick, spoken like someone who will be first in line for free healthcare.

WMCobbLab

9:46 AM EDT
Jul 13, 2011

This might be a long shot, but are any of you aware of a link between poor dental health and meningitis, the disease that was officially listed as one of Deamonte Driver's causes of death? I'm curious about this topic, and was hoping that somebody might know something more about this. I appreciate any and all of the help, and it was really great reading all of the comments and responses to this article. It's good to see that some people are still able to notice a problem when they see one, and even more so that they are actively seeking to amend it.

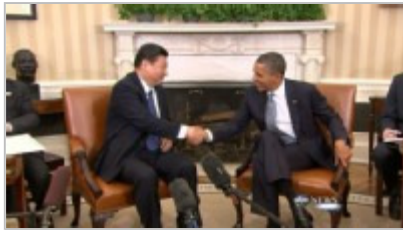
mdaahj

7:21 AM EDT
May 22, 2008

While I definately agree that while our country seems to always have money to help other countries, and doesn't give the USA the \$\$\$ needed to provide services to our own people, I do believe that people need to be a little more responsible in the choices. If you can't afford to have children, and that means being able to feed and clothe them, give them a proper place to live, medical and dental needs, then you should not have children. You should not have children and then expect medicare to cover your needs. That is just irresponsible parenting. I have teenagers, and I have been 100% responsible for their medical and dental bills. And yes, putting 2 kids in braces, a son who had jaw surgery, I know what it is like to pay those bills. Yes, we have insurance, but it also comes with a \$2800 deductible.....which means it covers NOTHING until we pay that first \$2800, that is 2 months salary in this household. So even though we have insurance, it really isn't any easier for us. I guess I am sick of people saying I am on Medicaid, I can't afford it. Then quit having children and expecting society to care for them. Get off your butt and get a job. Be responsible. It is a tragedy what happened to this child, and it is sad that the child did not get the help he needed. But, where does the responsibility of the parent come in. There are so many angles to this story, as to "who" is responsible, why wasn't care given. God Bless This Chid.

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