

## **Supports SB 660 – 1 To Expand Oregon’s Dental Sealant Program**

Dental pain is the leading cause of missed school days. An effective, inexpensive programs exists that could dramatically improve the oral health of young students.

### **Evidence-based Oral Health**

There are only two evidence-based public health programs to improve oral health — fluoridated water and dental sealants. Only 27% of Oregonians have access to fluoridated water and that number is not expected to increase any time soon. So the best way to improve children’s oral health is sealants, which was recognized by the Metric and Scoring Committee. Most decay (90%) occurs in molars and school-based sealant programs can reduce tooth decay by 40% to 50%. **The OHA’s Dental Sealant Program (DSP) has undertaken this work for years and is uniquely positioned to oversee an expansion.** In many cases dental care organizations and community groups can provide the service while being certified by the DSP.

### **Sealants are simple and effective**

Dental teams bring portable equipment to the schools, screen participating students and apply a liquid sealant to the chewing surfaces of molars to prevent decay. The process takes about one minute.

### **Oregon has an effective school-based dental sealant program**

Schools where 50% of the students qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) are eligible for Oregon’s sealant programs. In 2012-13, the DSP screened 8,349 children, provided 16,581 sealants in 5,527 children, and referred another 2,309 children for dental care.

### **Sealants are inexpensive**

The budget for Oregon’s school-based sealant program was just \$380,000 in 2013-15, or \$190,000 per year. It costs an average of \$40 per child who receives sealants.

### **More children could be served**

Simple steps could be taken so more of Oregon’s children could receive dental sealants:

1. **Expand to all eligible schools.** In 2012-13, 104 eligible schools with 11,049 students did not participate in the program. **Cost: \$149,160 per year**
2. **Change the qualifying standard from 50% FRL to 40% FRL.** This would add 8,085 children to the program. Of those, 2,729 would be expected to receive parental permission and sealants. **Cost: \$109,160 per year**
3. **Add middle school students.** Permanent molars come in by 6<sup>th</sup> grade. This would add 11,875 students of whom 4,008 would get sealants. **Cost: \$160,320 per year**
4. **Improve data collection.** A reporting process needs to be developed so the DSP and community providers can tell CCOs when their children receive sealants. **Cost: unknown**

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