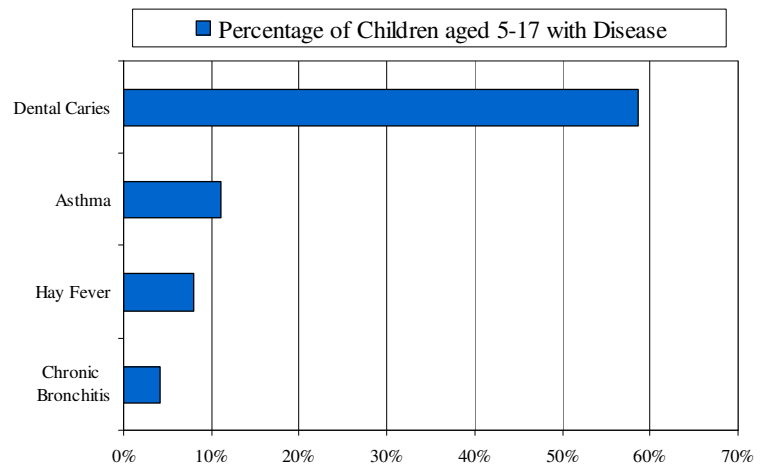


Filling the Gap – Unmet Dental Needs in South Dakota

Dental Caries: The Most Common Chronic Disease among Children 5-17 years old



- According to the National Institute of Dental Research, dental caries remains the most common, chronic disease in children – five to eight times more common than asthma.
- Statistics show that for every child who lacks medical insurance, roughly 2.6 times that number lack dental insurance. Children without any form of dental insurance are three times more likely to experience decay than those with insurance.
- Sixty-six percent of South Dakota third graders have experienced decay.
- **One third of South Dakota third grade children have *untreated* dental decay. Six percent of those children need urgent dental care because of pain or infection.**
- **American Indian third graders' untreated decay rates are at 51 percent.**
- Poor oral health of children has been related to poor performance in school, poor social relationships and less success later in life. If children are in pain, it distracts them from concentrating on schoolwork. Low- and moderate income children miss a disproportionate amount of school due to oral disease.
- The American Dental Association, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the American Academy of Pediatrics all recommend that children see a dentist by age one. In South Dakota, only about 1 in 8 one-year-olds with some form of dental coverage have had a dental visit and the number is likely much lower for those without any dental insurance.
- Tooth decay is overwhelmingly preventable--and prevention is cost effective. Every \$1.00 spent on prevention saves \$4.00 in treatment.



Case Statement Regarding CHIP and Dental Coverage in South Dakota

Nationally and in South Dakota, the CHIP program lacks “wrap around” dental coverage for those children from working-poor families what have medical but no dental coverage. Children who receive medical benefits through their parent’s employer-sponsored or family-purchased plan are not eligible for dental coverage through CHIP, even if they meet the income and other eligibility standards.

For example, a farm family from Bison who has purchased a private, high-deductible (catastrophic) medical policy but whose income level qualifies them for CHIP are not able to apply for CHIP dental coverage because current law does not allow them to get dental care under CHIP due to the fact that they are covered by private medical insurance.

It is estimated that there are roughly 18,000 South Dakota children who are between 140 and 200 percent of the poverty level who fall into this category. Since uninsured children are three times more likely to suffer from untreated dental problems, these are the children who are most at-risk.