**ORAL HEALTH PROGRAM**

**FY 2024 FACT SHEET**

**Background**

Oral health is important to overall health but is often overlooked. Oral conditions that affect overall health and quality of life include untreated tooth decay, severe gum disease, and severe tooth loss. Cavities are one of the greatest unmet treatment needs among children. Pain and suffering associated with untreated cavities can lead to problems with eating, speaking, and learning. Most cavities in children can be prevented through the placement of dental sealants. Further, people who live in communities with water fluoridation experience 25% fewer cavities than those who do not have access to water fluoridation. Water fluoridation and dental sealants are proven approaches for preventing dental disease and provide a positive return on investment.

**CDC’s Oral Health Program**

CDC’s Division of Oral Health (DOH) promotes cost-saving interventions to prevent tooth decay among children and adults, including community water fluoridation and dental sealants. **CDC currently funds 20 states to collect data on the burden of oral diseases to ensure that oral disease prevention programs are targeted to those at highest risk.** They also fund states to maintain and expand access to community water fluoridation and to administer programs that deliver dental sealants to high-risk children in school settings.

With an increase in funding, DOH would fund additional states, as well as provide increased funding to states with programs that are already being implemented. DOH works in partnership with organizations such as the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors, Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors, American Dental Association, and American Academy of Pediatrics to coordinate cost-saving approaches to preventing oral disease and improving the oral health and overall health of people across the country by promoting proven risk-reduction interventions. CDC also works with organizations such as the Organization for Safety, Asepsis, and Prevention to develop and promote infection prevention and control guidelines in dental settings.

**With additional resources, CDC could update their existing guidelines – focusing on new dental technologies – to better protect the health of patients receiving dental care in offices across the United States.** Finally, CDC has been at the forefront of promoting what is known as ‘medical-dental integration’ – an approach that involves coordinated and collaborative care that is patient-centered, prevention-based, and systematic. **With additional resources, CDC could advance partnerships between oral and medical providers, including promoting recommendations from a National Action Framework to support whole-person integrated care and ongoing partner engagement that is currently under development.**

**Basic Facts**

* Children with poor oral health are more likely to miss school and receive lower grades.
* About 1 in 5 (20%) children aged 5 to 11 have at least one untreated decayed tooth.
* 1 in 7 (13%) adolescents aged 12 to 19 have at least one untreated decayed tooth.
* Children aged 5 to 19 years from low-income families are twice as likely (25%) to have cavities, compared with children from higher-income households (11%).
* Almost half (46%) of adults over age 30 already show signs of gum disease, and more than 40% have felt pain in their mouth during the past year.

**Cavities are Preventable**

* Fluoride varnish can prevent about one-third (33%) of cavities in primary (baby) teeth.
* Children living in communities with fluoridated tap water have fewer cavities than children whose water is not fluoridated.
* Children who brush daily with fluoride toothpaste will have fewer cavities.
* Applying dental sealants to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth can prevent 80% of cavities in children and last for years.

**Medical-Dental Integration**

* Poor oral health may be associated with other chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.
* People with diabetes are more likely to have oral health problems, like cavities; tooth loss; gum disease; and dry mouth.
* Oral disease is associated with risky behaviors including tobacco use and consuming sugary foods and beverages; and can limit healthy behaviors like eating nutritious foods.
* During pregnancy, women are more prone to cavities and gum disease.

**Impact of Poor Oral Health**

* Oral health affects our ability to speak, smile, eat, and show emotions. It also affects self-esteem, school performance, attendance at work and school, and the ability to thrive.
* Oral diseases—which range from cavities to gum disease to oral cancer—cause pain and disability for millions of Americans.
* Tooth decay is one of the most common chronic conditions in the United States. Among adults aged 20 and over, about 90% of people have had at least one cavity.
* On average, the nation spends more than $124 billion a year on costs related to dental care. More than $45 billion of productivity is lost each year due to unplanned dental visits.
* Oral health has been linked with other chronic diseases, like diabetes and heart disease. It is also linked with risk behaviors, such as tobacco use, and consuming foods and beverages high in sugar.
* Public health strategies, such as community water fluoridation and school dental sealant programs, have been proven to save money and prevent cavities.