



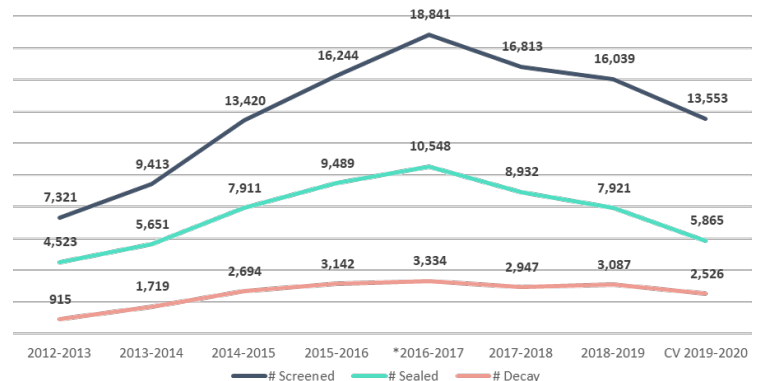
I-SMILE™ @SCHOOL

2019-2020 UPDATE ON THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S SCHOOL-BASED SEALANT PROGRAM

I-Smile™ @ School is the Iowa Department of Public Health's preventive school-based dental program that focuses on improving the oral health of Iowa's students. Services are provided through 20 contractors - public and private non-profit organizations that manage Iowa's Title V Maternal and Child Health program. Dental hygienists provide dental screenings, risk assessments, sealant and fluoride varnish applications, and classroom and individual oral health education. Care coordination is also provided to encourage regular dental visits and to help kids identified with decay to get restorative treatment when needed. These hygienists and other staff build and grow relationships with community stakeholders to ensure school-aged children have access to low-cost and beneficial oral health prevention services, especially those children at a higher risk for tooth decay. I-Smile™ @ School is supported by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation, Health Resources and Services Administration (Title V grant), and Medicaid reimbursement.

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has administered school-based sealant programs since 1995, with significant expansion in 2013. This expansion was due to a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and subsequent partnership with the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation. Although the 2019-2020 school year ended prematurely, nearly twice as many students received dental screenings than in 2013 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Nearly Twice as Many Kids Screened through I-Smile @ School in 2019-2020 than 2012-2013

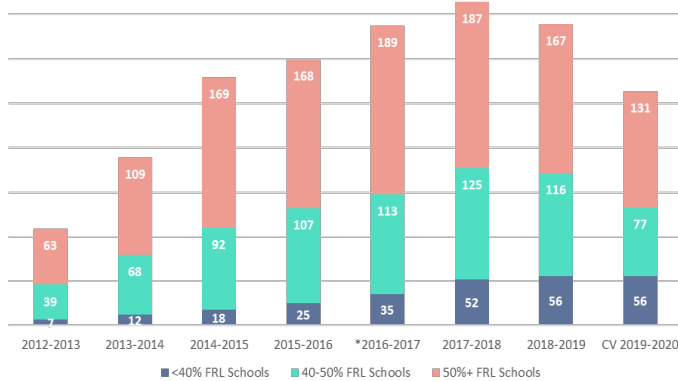


*Values presented may be inaccurate due to TAVConnect transition
CV COVID-19 affected early school closings in March 2020, ending all in-school program services

The total number of students served has risen since 2013, yet a decline in annual participation has been trending since 2016-2017. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in all Iowa schools closing in March 2020 for the remainder of the school year, greatly reducing the number of program participants for the 2019-2020 school year. The lower numbers of students participating may also be the result of some of the following issues: 1) schools transitioning to electronic registration processes, which do not include consents for non-school sponsored activities; and 2) challenges for public health organizations with hiring, securing, and retaining dental workforce. To increase participation, IDPH has developed contractor-specific electronic consent forms, which have been used by 12 contractors to date. IDPH also continues to share best-practice program models with contractors.

The number of participating schools with 40% or greater Free and Reduced (FRL) participation rates has increased greatly since the 2012-2013 school year (Figure 2). That year, 102 schools were served; 312 schools were served in the 2017-2018 school year. Prior to the Spring 2020 school closures, I-Smile™ @ School had served 208 schools in the 2019-2020 school year. Additional schools below the 40% FRL threshold are also served by I-Smile™ @ School to address dental health care barriers identified within communities.

Figure 2: More than Twice as Many Schools Served through I-Smile @ School in 2019-2020 than 2012-2013

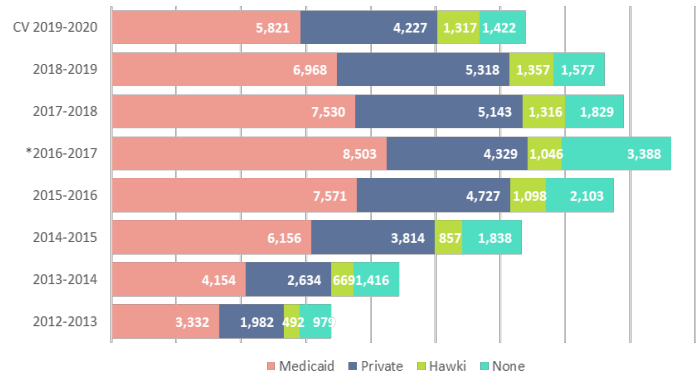


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A major barrier for low-income Iowa children in accessing regular dental care continues to be that a limited number of dentists will accept patients enrolled in Iowa Medicaid. This challenge has become increasingly more difficult, due to

the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on dental office closures and fewer appointment availabilities. Focusing on schools with higher FRL rates is more important than ever to ensure that preventive dental services are provided for children who may otherwise not receive them. Each year, approximately 50% of I-Smile™ @ School participants are Medicaid-enrolled children (Figure 3). An increasingly larger proportion of privately insured children are also participating each year, which may indicate difficulty for families to access care using the current dental delivery system and appreciation for offering services in the schools.

Figure 3: Half of Students Served through I-Smile @ School are Enrolled in Medicaid



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Program impact can be measured by caries (cavities) aversion calculations. Since the start of the 2012-2013 school year, I-Smile™ @ School has averted more than 18,992 cavities. In addition, it is estimated that \$1.8 million would have been paid by insurers and families on restorative treatment, had children not received dental sealants.

Iowa's school-based dental sealant programs have prevented tooth decay and improved access to care and overall health of students for more than 20 years. In light of the ongoing pandemic, it will be increasingly crucial to continue I-Smile™ @ School to ensure all children have access to oral health care. Alternative preventive and educational oral health services, especially in school settings, will be important as the landscape of our state changes throughout the pandemic. The I-Smile™ @ School commitment to increase oral health access for some of our most susceptible Iowans remains strong.