



FACT SHEET

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

Keeping Connecticut Healthy

What is "Every Smile Counts"?

"Every Smile Counts" is an oral health survey of Head Start, kindergarten and third grade children sponsored by the State Department of Public Health in collaboration with the State Department of Education to describe the oral health of Connecticut's children and to determine the need for additional dental programs and interventions. This is an anonymous survey. No child will be identified. This screening does not take the place of a regular dental examination by a dentist. It is a one-time survey and is NOT meant to replace any existing oral health program in schools.

Why is it important to assess the oral health status of children in Connecticut?

- Oral disease, specifically dental decay, is the most common chronic childhood disease, five (5) times more common than asthma.
- Oral disease can become evident in school-age children with an increase in absenteeism, lack of concentration, lack of sleep, inability to eat, decreased school performance, and poor social relationships.
- Overall, it accounts for more than 51 million school hours lost each year. For acute dental conditions, school children missed a total of 1.6 million days of school, which is more than 3 days for every 100 students.
- Currently there are no statewide data on oral health in children in Connecticut.
- Oral disease can be prevented.
- The consequences of oral disease (i.e. cavities), if identified early, can reduce or eliminate associated morbidity and reduce health care expenditures.

What type of information will be collected in the survey?

"Every Smile Counts" will use a nationally standardized tool developed by the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) and the Ohio Department of Public Health in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control to measure oral health status. The presence or absence of dental decay (cavities), dental sealants and the need for routine or urgent care will be collected. Additionally, age, grade, gender, race/ethnicity and dental care access information will also be collected.

How will it be collected and by whom?

Trained licensed and registered dental hygienists will collect the oral health information by looking directly into the child's mouth using a disposable dental mirror or tongue blade and penlight. Additionally, parents will respond to a brief questionnaire. Recorders will input

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the oral health information into a computer or on a data collection sheet. All information, including questionnaire responses, will be recorded in a central survey database.

Who will be asked to participate?

Approximately 20 Head Start Programs and 78 elementary schools will be asked to participate in the survey.



Why target Head Start, kindergarten and third grade children?

The survey of these grade levels is important to understand the extent of oral disease (1) in very young children who are susceptible to a rapidly progressive oral disease called Early Childhood Caries; (2) to assess the status of children entering the school system; and (3) to assess children with mixed dentition (primary and permanent teeth). Children in these grades will give an accurate profile of oral disease experience of children in Connecticut.

How will schools/Head Start sites be chosen?

A stratified random sampling method with stratification by county will be used. As a result, approximately 8,500 kindergarten and third graders and approximately 600 Head Start children will be screened.

Will any staff (teachers, nurses, other) in schools/Head Start Programs be required to give time to this survey?

We request that someone at the sites be designated as the contact person for the dental team (hygienist and recorder). This person will let the team know where on site they can conduct the screenings. We also request that there be an escort to get the children to and from the screening area. This escort can be a volunteer or parent for the day of the screening. Teachers will be asked to send home and collect the questionnaires from parents.

Will classroom lessons be disturbed?

One goal of the survey is to be as unobtrusive to regular classroom schedules as possible, so we leave it to the discretion of the schools to decide how to proceed. For example, some schools prefer to release the entire class for the survey. Others release children in small groups for the survey while continuing with regular classroom activities.

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How long will this survey take?

Collection of the oral health information (screening) will take only one to three minutes per child. The screening team will be at selected sites for one day. The surveys in all selected sites will be completed during the 2006-07 school year.

What are the benefits to schools/Head Start Programs that participate?

There is no cost to participate in "Every Smile Counts". Schools that participate in the "Every Smile Counts" survey will be

- (1) given incentives for the school, staff and students that participate
- (2) provided with survey information for their site to use for health promotion and funding opportunities
- (3) recognized for contributing to this important initiative

How will the information collected be used?

The information will be used to establish an oral health status baseline for ongoing surveillance, to determine the need for oral health prevention and interventions programs, for policy development and opportunities for oral health promotion and funding. No school and no child will be identified in any reports of the "Every Smile Counts" survey.

What organizations are in support of this survey?

State and national organizations are in support of "Every Smile Counts". They include:

Connecticut Health Foundation
Connecticut State Dental Foundation
Connecticut Association of School Nurses
Connecticut Association of School-based Health Centers
Area Health Education Centers (AHECs)
Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents
Connecticut Dental Hygienists' Association
Connecticut Head Start Association
Connecticut State Dental Association
Connecticut Oral Health Initiative
State Department of Education
University of Connecticut, School of Dental Medicine
National Association of State & Territorial Dental Directors
Regional Head Start Program
National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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