



ORAL HEALTH ACCESS FOR ALL

Support SB 490 Sponsored by Senator Chris Smith

HB 1469 Sponsored by Representative Pat Patterson

ORAL HEALTH MATTERS

Innovative states have been able to design programs that connect communities with the preventive oral health care needed to stay healthy. These programs have solved problems of oral health access and shown significant long-term improvements for children and adults. The Florida Surgeon General emphasizes the importance of oral health care to overall general health.¹

Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease;² fortunately *it is almost entirely preventable*. Nationally, children miss more than 51 million school hours each year due to dental disease. These children can have trouble eating, speaking, and paying attention in school. Tooth decay is five times more common than asthma.³

Poor oral health has been associated with heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, delivery of pre-term and low-birth weight babies.³

Left untreated, dental disease can even result in death as was seen in 2007, when a 12 year old boy from Maryland died from a bacterial brain infection that began with an abscessed tooth.⁴ Children in Florida are at the same risk, but we know how to treat this disease. The combination of sealants and fluoride has the potential to nearly eliminate tooth decay in school age children.⁵

Floridians cannot be healthy without good oral health!

SB 490 and HB 1469 will provide direct access to the preventive oral health services of a **Registered Dental Hygienist (RDH)** in programs and institutions of the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Health, the Department of Juvenile Justice, nonprofit community health centers, Head Start centers, federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), FQHC look-alikes as defined by federal law, school based prevention programs, clinics operated by accredited colleges of dentistry and accredited dental hygiene programs.

64 of Florida's 67 counties include groups of communities that have been designated as Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas. This means the people living in these communities have to travel long distances to access the care they need to stay healthy.⁶

RDHs are a COMMON SENSE solution to a serious health care access problem. Oral disease is almost entirely preventable. Utilize our prevention specialists - the licensed **RDH** workforce - to solve this problem efficiently and cost-effectively. In fact, for every dollar spent on the type of preventive care provided by **RDHs**, between \$8 and \$50 are saved in restorative and emergency treatment services.⁷

FLORIDA CAN DO BETTER

According to a report released 2/23/10 by the Pew Center on the States, Florida receives an "F" on how well we're employing proven and promising approaches to ensure the oral health of our children.⁸

When policy makers, school nurses, pediatricians, business leaders and other community members work together with dental professionals to make oral health a statewide priority all persons in Florida gain access to much needed services.

What can our state do now?

SUPPORT SB 490 and HB 1469

- Authorize **RDHs** to provide direct access to preventive care (cleanings, fluoride treatments and sealants).
- Preventive services are already included in the **RDHs** scope of practice.
- **RDHs** can prevent dental disease and improve overall health for all Floridians.
- **RDHs** are educationally qualified and licensed to provide direct access to care (more college credit hours than RN).

The results of not receiving timely preventive and treatment services are dramatic and can be devastating to overall health.

By making sure all Floridians have preventive oral health services available to them in their communities, we will have healthier and more productive citizens.

SB 490 and HB 1469 are about getting people preventive oral health care that they can't access now!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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“As a pediatrician, it makes great policy sense to institute routine dental prevention as an essential and ongoing part of health care. As with immunizations, when children have access to preventive care early and often, we can stop the majority of dental disease from ever occurring. I support SB 490 and HB 1469 because it will dramatically expand access to preventive dental services for all people in Florida.”

Claude Earl Fox, M.D., M.P.H.
Executive Director, Florida Public Health Institute
Research Professor, Miller School of Medicine
University of Miami

- ¹ Florida Department of Health. *Florida Department of Health: Health Practitioner Oral Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee Report*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Health; February 2009.
- ² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research; 2000. Chapter 4, p 63.
- ³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research; 2000. Executive Summary p 2.
- ⁴ Otto M. For want of a dentist: Prince George's boy dies after bacteria from tooth spread to brain. *Washington Post*. February 28, 2007.
- ⁵ Kim S, Lehman AM, Siegal MD, Lemeshow S. Statistical model for assessing the impact of targeted, school-based dental sealant programs on sealant prevalence among third graders in Ohio. *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* 63 (Summer 2003): 195–199.
- ⁶ The Academy of General Dentistry, Health Insurance Underwriter, June 2004 article in “Employee Benefit Plan Review” by Dr. James Gimarelli — As quoted by John R. Stoner in “A Voluntary Dental Plan vs. No Dental Plan” in *Health Insurance Underwriter*, June 2005, p 13.
- ⁷ US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, <http://hpsafind.hrsa.gov/HPSASearch.aspx>
- ⁸ Pew Center on the States. *The Cost of Delay: State Dental Policies Fail One in Five Children*; February 23, 2010.
- ⁹ Florida Department of Health. *Florida Oral Health Workforce Workgroup Report 2009*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Health; December 2009.
- ¹⁰ Florida Department of Health. Board of Dentistry General Business Meeting Minutes 10-30-2009, p.12. http://www.doh.state.fl.us/mqa/dentistry/min_10-30-09.pdf

SUPPORTED BY

FL Health Practitioner Oral Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee (4/08-2/09)¹

HRSA Florida Oral Health Workforce Workgroup (12/08-8/09)⁹

Florida Board of Dentistry (10/30/09)¹⁰

Florida Public Health Institute

Children’s Dental Health Project

Florida Public Health Association

Florida Head Start Association

Health Foundation of South Florida

Florida Allied Dental Educators Dental Hygiene Section

Special Olympics Florida

Children’s Volunteer Health Network, Inc.

OnSite HealthCareServices

Alzheimer’s Project of Tallahassee

North Florida Child Development, Inc.

Suwannee Valley Community Coordinated Child Care, Inc.

Miami-Dade County Community Action Agency Head Start/Early Head Start Program

Florida’s Head Start State Collaboration Office

Palm Beach County Oral Health Coalition

Heartland Rural Health Network, Inc.

As of 3/5/10

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