Protect Medicaid Dental Coverage for Pregnant Women

Governor's budget proposal includes a cut to Medicaid dental coverage for pregnant women ($1.9 million state funds which are federally matched).

- More than **30,000 pregnant women** enrolled on Medicaid each year could lose access to dental care. In Washington, nearly half of all births are paid for by Medicaid.[i]

Oral health care for pregnant women = early prevention and cost savings

- Because bacteria that can cause tooth decay is often transmitted from moms to babies. Dental disease may also cause complications during pregnancy that are expensive to treat and put babies at risk.[ii] Ensuring pregnant women have access to dental care can promote **healthier pregnancies and lead to better oral health for thousands of children**.

- Nearly 40% of children started kindergarten having experienced tooth decay, and nearly 14% of all kindergarten children have untreated tooth decay. Untreated dental disease can interfere with a child's ability to eat, sleep, and concentrate in school.

- In Washington, Medicaid spent more than $87 million in 2010 treating children for dental disease. Research shows that for children early prevention can substantially reduce future dental costs. (see graph on next page)

- Pregnant women with coverage and access to dental care are also less likely to need costly emergency room care. Dental problems are the number one reason uninsured patients visit hospital emergency rooms for a health issue not generally classified as an emergency.[iii]

For more information, please contact Sylvia Gil at Washington Dental Service Foundation at (206) 528-7327 or visit www.OralHealthWatch.org.

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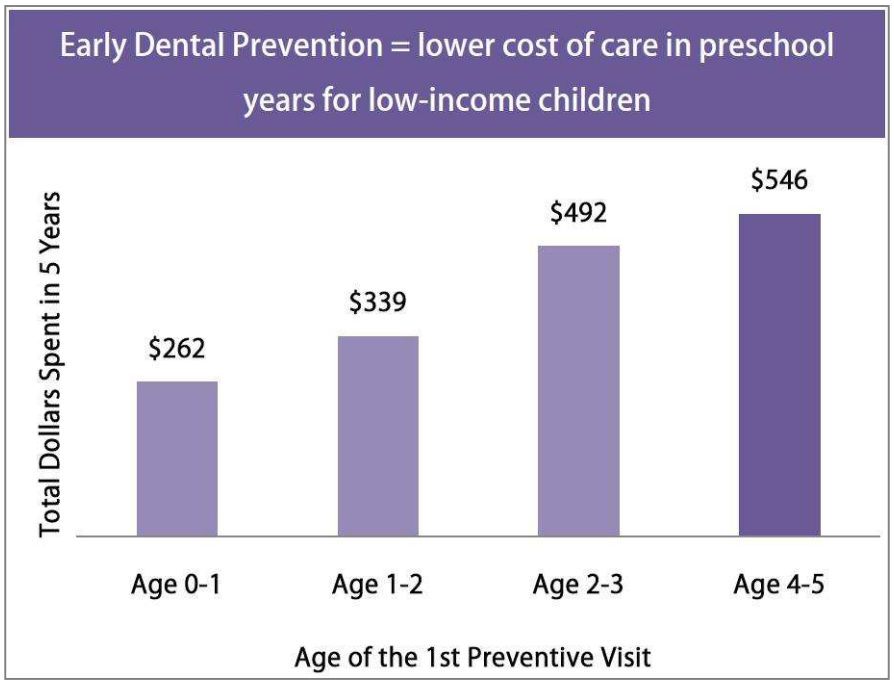
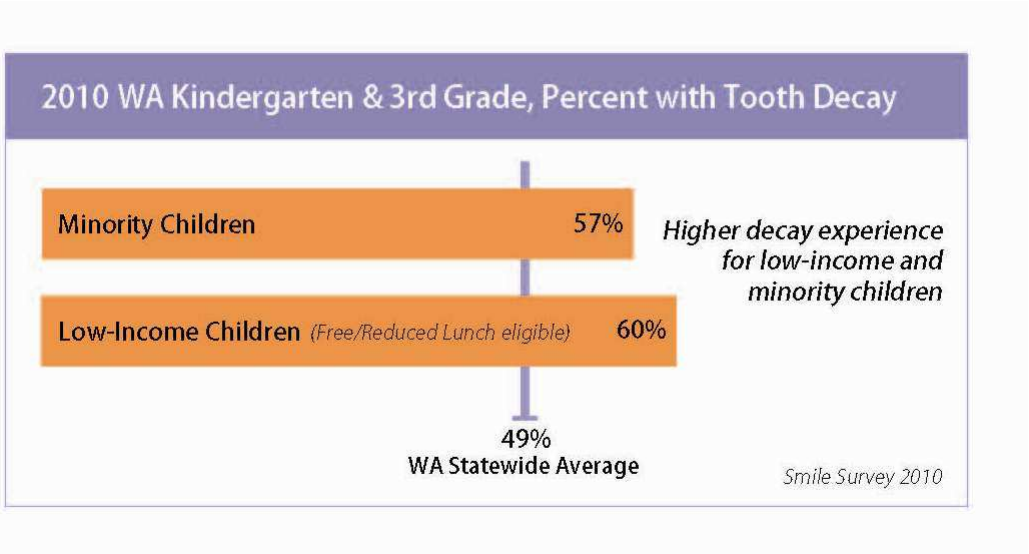
Washington Dental Service Foundation
Community Advocates for Oral Health

[i] Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis.2008.
[ii] California Dental Association Foundation. Oral Health During Pregnancy and Early Childhood: Evidence-Based Guidelines for Health Professionals Guidelines, February 2010.
[iii] Washington State Hospital Association, Emergency Room Use, October 2010.



Source: Lee, JY et al. Examining the cost-effectiveness of early dental visits. American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry 2006;28(2):102-5.

Significant Oral Health Disparities in Children's Oral Health Persist



Washington State Smile Survey 2010. Washington State Department of Health. Olympia, WA. 2010. DOH Pub No 160-099.