



## **UPDATE ON ORAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**Presented to  
Governor Bill Haslam  
And  
Tennessee Dental Association**

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# I

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of the Tennessee Department of Health is to protect, promote, and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee. Operating within this mission the Tennessee Department of Health's Oral Health Services (OHS) strives to prevent and control oral diseases through organized community efforts. The following information is an outline of those efforts during Fiscal Year 2018. The Tennessee Department of Health dental program expenditures for Fiscal Year 2018 were \$16,653,862 and are broken down by each program below.

### Key Service Deliveries Fiscal Year 18

#### **Oral Disease Prevention—Nurse's Fluoride Varnish Program**

- An expenditure of \$276,980 (calculations based on an average of \$5.00 per application) provided 55,396 at risk children with oral health screenings, referrals, and fluoride varnish applications by Public Health Nurses in Tennessee Department of Health medical clinics.

#### **School-Based Dental Prevention Project (SBDPP)**

- An expenditure of \$6,810,900 provided more than 55,739 at risk children with dental screenings or dental exams, 134,718 with oral health education, and 44,857 children received 272,101 sealants in 369 schools and 121 community projects at an average cost of \$25.03 per sealant.

#### **Community Water Fluoridation**

- Four public water systems notified the department of health of their intent to cease fluoridation, with intervention from health department staff and community partners three (75%) of those systems continued to fluoridate.

#### **Public Health Dental Clinical Facilities**

- An expenditure of \$9,376,182 provided 18,854 children with 31,016 dental visits and 6,937 adults with 12,758 visits to the 40 staffed Department of Health dental clinics. A total of 25,791 individuals made 43,774 patient visits receiving 195,975 dental services (149,069 to children) at an average cost of \$47.84 per service.

#### **Adult Dental Funding Program**

- An expenditure of \$189,800 provided 28,026 dental extractions and 6,627 dental cleaning, at a cost of \$5.48 per service. The grants were awarded by the Department for emergency dental services for adults.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Statement of compliance with 2012 Tenn. Pub. Acts, ch. 1061 (the "Eligibility Verification for Entitlements Act" as required by Tenn. Code Ann. § 4-57-106(b)). The Tennessee Department of Health, including local health departments, boards and commissions, has implemented protocols and policies to verify that every adult applicant for "public benefits" is an United States citizen or a "qualified alien," within the meaning of Chapter 1061.

## **Distribution of Information**

- The Department of Health published the first addition of the Tennessee State Oral Health Plan during 2017. The State Oral Health Plan, in coordination with the State Health Plan, offers a blueprint for improving the health of people in Tennessee. Then initial annual update was delivered to the plan's stakeholders in September of 2018. The entire plan continues to be broadly distributed throughout the state.
- The Department of Health distributed traditional paper literature covering a broad range of oral health information to other agencies and the general public. The Department has an Oral Health Services website to provide information to public health professionals, parents, community leaders, and the general public.

## II

### INTRODUCTION

This report is provided in response to Tennessee Code Annotated 68-1-303(b), which requires the Commissioner of Health to provide an annual report to the Governor and the Tennessee State Dental Association (TDA) on the work done by and under the Commissioner in regards to distribution of literature throughout the state to inform the population of the “proper way to care for teeth”.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states tooth decay (cavities) is one of the most common chronic conditions of childhood in the United States and nearly one-third of all adults in the United States have untreated tooth decay. Tooth decay is a threat to oral health across the lifespan. The mission of the Department of Health is to protect, promote, and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee. In advancement of this goal, the Department’s Oral Health Services Section (OHS) operates on the fundamental principles of preventing and controlling oral diseases through organized community efforts. Statewide school-based dental programs continue to offer high-risk populations preventive services to include sealants, oral health education, and screenings to identify children with unmet dental needs, referrals for these children, and follow-up on those children with urgent needs. Comprehensive dental services for children and emergency dental care to adults, unable to access care in the private system, are provided in fixed facilities located in rural health departments statewide. In an effort to improve access to dental services for high risk children in underserved areas, the Tennessee Department of Health partners with local school systems to offer a School Transport Program. The local school system transports target population children to local health department dental clinics, which provide comprehensive dental services. Four clinical sites have partnered with area dental colleges, Meharry Medical College and the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, where fourth year dental students rotate through the clinic and help provide comprehensive dental services to a targeted adult population.

#### Summary of Dental Services

Program	Number Served	Number of Services
Nurse’s Fluoride Varnish Program	55,396	55,396
School Based Dental Prevention Program (Sealants)	44,857 (children)	272,101 (teeth sealed)
Public Health Rural Dental Clinical Program	25,791 (18,854 to children)	195,975 (149,069 to children)
Adult Dental Funding Program	34,653 (services)	34,653
Total	160,697	558,125

### III

## ORAL HEALTH

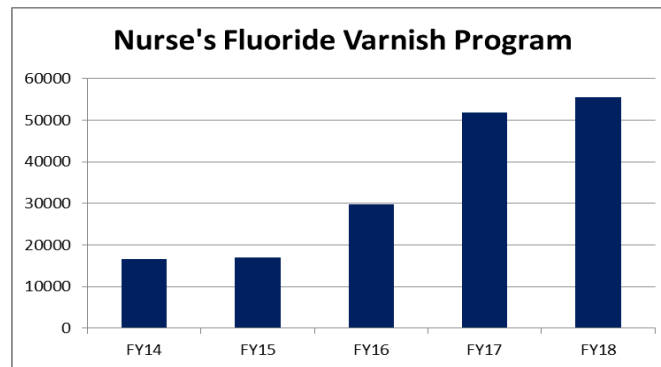
### A. Oral Disease Prevention

#### 1. Nurse's Fluoride Varnish Program

Tennessee Code Annotated § 63-5-109(14) allows Public Health Nurses to apply fluoride varnish to at risk underserved persons in public health clinics.

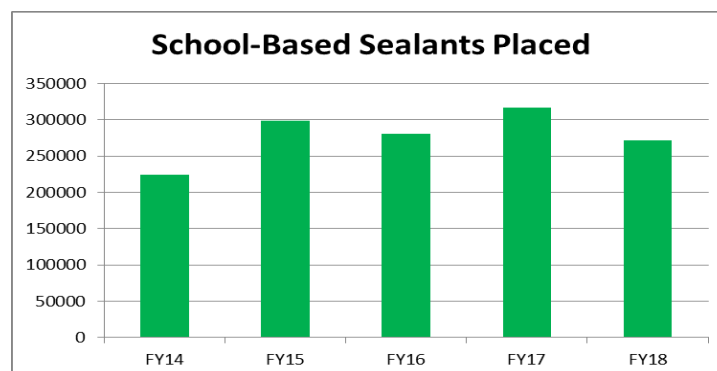
The Nurse's Fluoride Varnish Program targets children 0-5 years of age being seen in health department medical clinics. Nursing staff screen these children and refer them to dental providers in addition to applying fluoride varnish.

During Fiscal Year 2018, 55,396 (43,112 were children 0-5 years of age) at risk children were screened, referred, and had fluoride varnish applied by nursing staff in Tennessee Department of Health medical clinics.



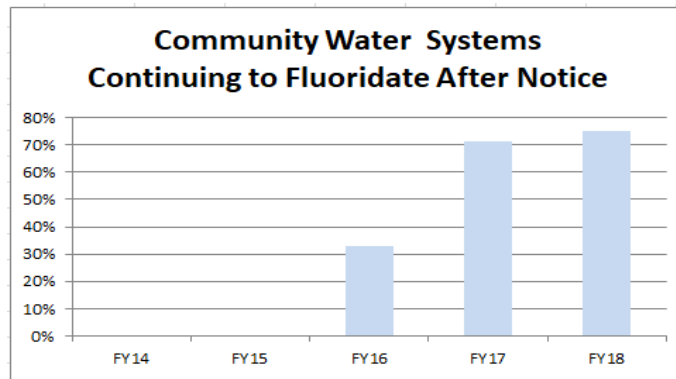
#### 2. School-Based Dental Prevention Program (SBDPP)

This program is a statewide comprehensive preventive program involving dental screenings, referrals and follow-up for dental care, oral hygiene education, and sealants. SBDPP targets children in grades K-8 in schools with 50% or more free and reduced lunch programs. During Fiscal Year 2018, 55,739 children received dental screenings or a dental examination, 134,718 received oral health education, and 272,101 sealants were placed on 44,857 children in 369 schools and 121 community projects. During Fiscal Year 2018 the School Based Dental staff referred 1,381 high priority children with unmet dental needs for follow-up.



### 3. *Community Water Fluoridation*

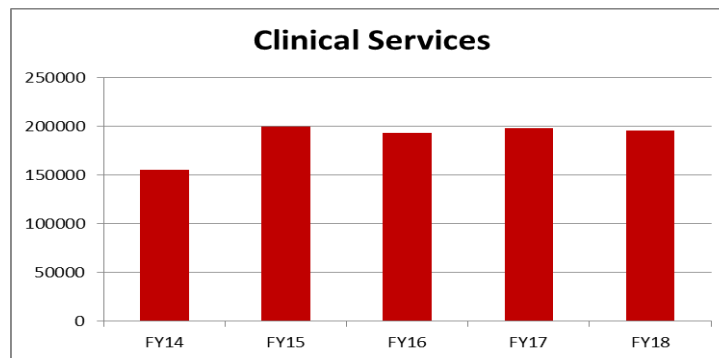
Tennessee Code Annotated § 68-221-708(c) states, any public water system which determines to initiate or permanently cease fluoridation, shall notify the department of environment and conservation and the department of health within 30 days prior to any vote. Community water fluoridation, which is primary prevention, is the most effective and economical way to prevent tooth decay for all ages. During Fiscal Year 2018, four public water systems notified the department of health of their intent to cease fluoridation, with intervention from health department staff and community partners, 75% (3) of those systems continued to fluoridate.



## B. Dental Services

### 1. *Public Health Dental Clinical Facilities*

The Department of Health offers comprehensive dental services to children and emergency care to adults on a sliding fee scale according to income. Dental services are available at the 40 staffed local health department clinics located in rural counties and one regional office across the state. Dental services are typically offered from 1 to 5 days per week. During the Fiscal Year 2018, 18,854 children made 31,016 visits to Department of Health dental clinics and 6,937 adults made 12,758 visits. In total during Fiscal Year 2018, 25,791 individuals made 43,774 patient visits receiving 195,975 dental services in the Department of Health dental clinics.



## 2. *Dental Transport Programs*

In an effort to improve access to dental services for high risk children in underserved areas, the Tennessee Department of Health partners with local school systems to offer a School Transport Program. The local school system transports target population children to local health department dental clinics, which provide comprehensive dental services. During Fiscal Year 2018 the School Transport Program provided dental services to 1,819 patients.

## 3. *Adult Dental Funding Program*

In Fiscal Year 2018, the Department provided funding for 28,026 dental extractions and 6,627 dental cleaning. The grants were awarded by the Department for emergency dental services for adults<sup>2</sup>

## 4. *Distribution of Information*

The Department of Health's website includes an Oral Health Services site that provides a broad range of information to public health professionals, parents, community leaders, and the general public. The web site address for Oral Health Services is <https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/oralhealth.html>.

The State Oral Health Plan has been broadly distributed across the state to community partners and stakeholders. The plan is accessible from the department's website at <https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/oralhealth/state-oral-health-plan.html>.

Staff in all of the Department's dental programs distributes literature and educational information to individuals served. This information addresses a wide variety of preventive dental topics such as the importance of oral health and proper oral hygiene techniques. Requests for oral health information from agencies and the public are addressed by staff at the local, regional and the central office levels.

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