



California Children's Oral Health

BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

Improving access to oral health is a necessary and critical step to improving overall oral health and reducing oral health disparities.

Early childhood caries (ECC) can result in severe pain, malocclusion, malnutrition, and low self-esteem.

Oral health disparities, also known as oral health inequities, are especially noted in children from racial/ethnic backgrounds and from low socio-economic backgrounds. These same racial/ethnic disparities exist in California, in addition to recent data suggesting citizenship status may also be a factor. Adolescent immigrants in California were half as less likely to access dental care in California compared to their citizen counterparts.

DISPARITIES

The greatest racial and ethnic disparity among children aged 2–4 years and aged 6–8 years is seen in Mexican American and black, non-Hispanic children. Non-white, non-Asians have poorer oral health amongst racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. Furthermore, across the U.S., Mexican American children and Hispanic children ages 2-4 and 6-8 years old have much higher tooth decay rates. More than 75 percent of dental cavities occur in 8% of U.S. children 2-5 years old.

Oral health disparities amongst U.S. children:

- Low socioeconomic status = high caries risk.
- Maternal prenatal smoking.
- Disabilities and complex medical conditions.
- Local disparities.

NHANES reports children aged 2-5 years are the only age group with increasing rates of dental disease, with 28% of children experiencing dental caries.

Local disparities can also exist. For instance, in San Francisco, a study identified Asian children living in 2 zip codes as having significantly higher dental caries experience than other children in the public school system.

OTHER STATISTICS ON CALIFORNIA'S CHILDREN

- 9,307,653 children live in California
- 2,600,068 are White, non-Hispanic
- 571,821 are Black
- 4,715,912 are Hispanic
- 1,032,398 are Asian/Pacific Islander
- 74,932 are American Indian/Alaska Native
- 665,643 are two or more races
- 73% of California's children are racial/ethnic minorities
- 22% of California's children are living in poverty, with more than 9% living in extreme poverty.

RESOURCES

Government Action & Communication Institute (GACI) has partnered with the University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry to distribute this brief as part of their legislative and executive education and training efforts. For more information contact GACI at 916 966-6643.

Improving Access to oral health care for vulnerable and underserved populations. Institute of Medicine, National Resource Council. Washington, DC. The National Academies Press.

Ramos-Gomez F. Clinical considerations for an infant oral health care program. Compendium of Clinical Education in Dentistry 2005. 26(5):17-23.

Stavrev T. Cubas P. Chung LH. Orellana M. Oral Health Disparities and Dental Care Utilization among California Adolescents. Poster Presentation: Research Day April 2011. University of California, San Francisco.

LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE RESOURCE HANDBOOK



http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/oral_health_disparities.htm.
Accessed 01/09/12.

Macek et al. 2005.

Ramos-Gomez FJ, Weintraub JA, Gansky SA, Hoover CI, Featherstone JD. Bacterial, behavioral and environmental factors associated with early childhood caries. *J Clin Pediatr Dent Winter*; 26 (2): 165-73, 2002.

Iida H, Auinger P, Billings RJ, Weitzman M. Association Between Infant Breastfeeding and Early Childhood Caries in the United States. *Pediatrics*. 120 (4). e944 -e952. 2007.

Flores G, Tomany-Korman SC. The language spoken at home and disparities in medical and dental health, access to care, and use of services in US children. *Pediatrics*. 2008 Jun;121(6):e1703-14.

How Race/Ethnicity, Immigration Status and Language Affect Health Insurance Coverage, Access to Care and Quality of Care Among the Low-Income Population, Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured (August 2003).

Chung LH, Shain SG, Stephen SM, Weintraub JA. Oral Health Status of San Francisco Public School Kindergarteners 2000-2005, *J. Pub. Health Dent*. 66(4): 235-241, 2006.

Children in the States. The Children's Defense Fund, accessed March 1, 2012. Based on data accessible as of January 26, 2012. www.childrensdefense.org/child.../2012-california-children-in-the-states.pdf.

California HealthCare Foundation, *Denti-Cal Facts and Figures* (Oakland, CA: California HealthCare Foundation, 2007).