

Key Impact: ORAL HEALTH



California is ranked
38th among states in providing dental care to all children enrolled in Medicaid.

WHAT WE KNOW

Good oral health is critical to a child's ability to grow up healthy and succeed in school and life.

Yet tooth decay is the number one reason children are absent from kindergarten, and ranks as the most common chronic health problem among California's children. Pediatric dental coverage is available through all Covered California health plans and Medi-Cal, yet access to dental care remains a critical problem for California's youngest children. Relatively few providers offer any dental care to young children enrolled in Medi-Cal, and even fewer provide full services for young children.

Early prevention and care are key. Expanded access to preventive and restorative oral health services and increased oral health education result not only in better oral health in the short-term, but also better overall health and well-being over a person's entire lifespan.

WE CAN DO BETTER: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

California can expand access to preventative and restorative oral health services and oral health education.

The First 5 Association of California recommends that policymakers take action to:

Increase utilization of essential Medi-Cal dental services by young children.

Expand the availability and geographic spread of pediatric oral health providers.

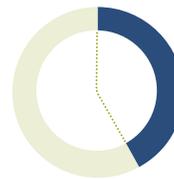
Mobilize state support for innovative approaches that provide oral health services in alternative settings.

Nearly 1.7 million

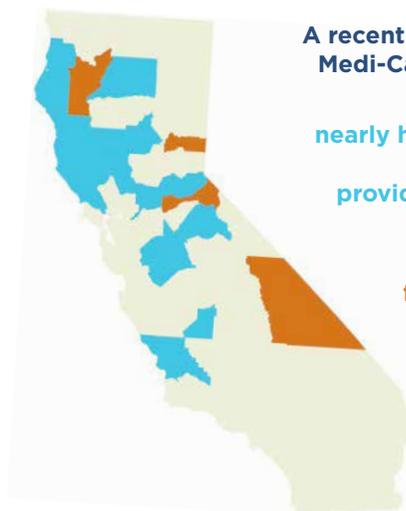
children enrolled in Medi-Cal in 2013 were age 5 and younger.



63%
of those children did not have a dental visit in the previous year.



Only 42%
of active Medi-Cal dental providers are accepting children 0-2 across Southern California. Even fewer provide full services for young children.



A recent state audit of the Medi-Cal dental program showed that:

nearly half of all counties had insufficient provider-to-beneficiary ratios to ensure access, and

five rural counties had no Medi-Cal dental providers at all.

First 5 leads the effort to build strong, effective and sustainable systems to serve young children in California. The First 5 Association of California is the membership organization for the 58 First 5 county commissions. In 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10 — The California Children and Families Act — creating First 5 commissions in every county. First 5 supports the healthy development of children from birth through five years of age.