



Brushing for Smiles

Delta Dental of Wisconsin partnered with Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee to pilot an oral health program. The model is designed to extend the preventative efforts taking place within Milwaukee's schools through the state's sealant program, Seal-A-Smile.

The goal of the pilot is to reduce signs of tooth decay before the children reach second grade where the sealant program in the schools normally begins. The program is twofold – educate parents and children on good oral health care, and expand preventative efforts through early screenings and daily tooth brushing.



At the heart of the pilot is the tooth-brushing program. The vision is to incorporate regular and correct tooth-brushing protocols into the daily schedules of the youngest Boys & Girls Club members, who are four to six years of age.

The tooth-brushing and dental education programs would serve as an adjunct to the Seal-A-Smile program, and provide more in-depth and continuous impact. By establishing good tooth-brushing habits early, the intent is to create lifelong healthy practices, which are critical to reducing cavities. This summer, the program was started at two Clubs – and plans are underway for implementation at ten additional sites this fall.

“The kids love it,” says Devon Reid, Manager of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boys & Girls Club. “It’s amazing how quickly they’ve added this to their routine after each meal we serve at the Club. I know we are making a difference for these kids, even if the pilot will take two years to show the actual outcomes.”

Why is this so critical? Initial screenings of the young children at the pilot clubs showed 41 percent already had decay requiring dental treatment. According to Robbyn Keaseter, Sealant and Fluoridation Program Coordinator for the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, that’s much higher than the statewide average of 31 percent of children screened in Seal-A-Smile needing treatment. With proper brushing, flossing, and visiting a dentist twice a year, cavities are preventable, which makes the data even more difficult to swallow!

“Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee is in a unique position to provide services to the families we need to reach, and they have a great relationship with the parents,” said Ann Boson, Director of the Charitable Fund for Delta Dental of Wisconsin. “The funding alone won’t make a difference if the parents and children don’t actively participate in the program. That’s why we believe this pilot will be effective and can be replicated at other similar organizations.”

In addition to this pilot, Delta Dental of Wisconsin provided a \$250,000 grant to expand the Seal-A-Smile sealant program to even more Milwaukee schools over the next two years.

About Delta Dental of Wisconsin

For more than 50 years, Delta Dental has been working to maintain healthy communities and healthy teeth. We provide dental benefits and services to more Wisconsin companies, subscribers, and their family members, than any other dental plan provider. Our mission is to improve oral health and we accomplish this by extending access to care, advancing science, and supporting an effective oral-health workforce. Through Delta Dental of Wisconsin’s Charitable Fund, we are committed to advancing solutions for Wisconsin’s oral health.