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DHHR Releases Children's Oral Health Surveillance Data

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (WVDHHR) Oral Health Program announced today new information on the oral health status of the state's children. According to this newly available data, 42.1 percent of third grade school children have had tooth decay, one of the most common chronic diseases of childhood. A total of 17.1 percent of these third graders had untreated tooth decay, an indication of overall oral health need.

In addition, 29 percent of third grade school children had received a dental sealant. Dental sealants, thin plastic coatings applied to the chewing surfaces of the back (molar) teeth, are one of the most effective ways to prevent tooth decay. They are particularly important for low-income children who lack access to regular dental care.

The new data collected during the 2010–2011 school year show that West Virginia is doing a good job providing services to children with dental caries. Of the 42 percent with caries experience, only 17.1 percent had untreated decay.

Dr. Jason Roush, State Dental Director said, "We still have work to do, but the data shows progress and reflects the hard work and collaboration within the oral health community. We need to continue evaluating ways to improve early preventative services and educational programs."

The new data is available through the National Oral Health Surveillance System (NOHSS) and can be viewed at <http://www.cdc.gov/nohss/>. NOHSS is a collaborative surveillance system provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD). The report is

also available on the WVDHHR Oral Health Program website at http://www.wvdhhr.org/mcfh/ICAH/oral_health_program.asp.

“Currently, 43 states provide data for third grade school children to the National Oral Health Surveillance System,” states Dr. William Bailey, DDS, MPH, Acting Director of the CDC Division of Oral Health. “These data allow states to assess the oral health status of school children, identify disparities in receipt of preventive services such as dental sealants, and guide decisions to efficiently use resources to improve the oral health of children.”