

# ***Children's Dental Health 2011***

Southern Early Childhood Association



## ***A Summary of the SECA States***

Policy Brief

June 2011

***Excerpted from *The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Matter*  
by the Pew Children's Dental Campaign***

[www.pewcenteronthestates.org/initiatives](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/initiatives)

## Notes

- The Pew Children's Dental Campaign **grades states on an A-through-F scale**, based on each state's performance in meeting eight policy benchmarks for children's dental health.
- The **eight policy benchmarks** are:
  - **Policy Benchmark 1: Having sealant programs in at least 25 percent of high risk schools.** Dental sealants are clear plastic coatings applied to the chewing surfaces of molars that block food and bacteria from gathering in those teeth. Sealants can prevent 60% of tooth decay at 1/3 the cost of filling a cavity.
  - **Policy Benchmark #2: Allowing a hygienist to place sealants in a school-based program without requiring a dentist's exam.** Some states require that children see a dentist before sealants are placed. Hygienist's are the primary dental providers in school based settings.
  - **Policy Benchmark #3: Providing optimally fluoridated water to at least 75% of residents who are served by public systems.** Pew found that 28 states succeeded in bringing fluoridated water to at least 75% of its citizens on public supplies.
  - **Policy Benchmark #4: Meeting or exceeding the 2007 national average (38.1%) of Medicaid-enrolled children ages 1 to 18 receiving dental services.** Only 11 states (**Arkansas**, Idaho, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Hampshire, **North Carolina**, **South Carolina**, **Texas**, Vermont and Washington) served more than half of Medicaid-enrolled kids in 2009.
  - **Policy Benchmark #5: Paying dentists who serve Medicaid-enrolled children at least the 2008 national average (60.5%) of median retail fees.** A 2010 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found that in 25 of 39 reporting states, fewer than half of dentists saw any Medicaid patients.
  - **Policy Benchmark #6: Reimbursing medical care providers through state Medicaid programs for preventive dental health services.** In the past year, more state Medicaid programs, including **Georgia**, began to reimburse medical providers for delivering preventive dental services.
  - **Policy Benchmark #7: Authorizing a new type of primary care dental provider.** Only Minnesota currently authorizes an allied dental provider (similar to a nurse practitioner).
  - **Policy Benchmark #8: State submits basic screening data to the national database that tracks oral health conditions.** Among 42 submitting states, the data from 10 are more than five years old, which limits the value of basing decisions on these statistics.

Source: *The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Matter*,  
[www.pewcenteronthestates.org/initiatives](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/initiatives), May 2011.

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### Overall Grade of SECA States: Children's Dental Health

SECA State	Grade 2010	Grade 2011	Total # of Benchmarks Met in 2011	Better/Worse/ The Same
Alabama	D	C	4 of 8	Better
Arkansas	F	C	4 of 8	Better
Florida	F	F	2 of 8	The Same
Georgia	C	B	5 of 8	Better
Kentucky	C	C	4 of 8	The Same
Louisiana	F	D	3 of 8	Better
Mississippi	D	C	4 of 8	Better
North Carolina	C	D	3 of 8	Worse
Oklahoma	C	B	5 of 8	Better
South Carolina	A	A	6 of 8	The Same
Tennessee	C	C	4 of 8	The Same
Texas	B	B	5 of 8	The Same
Virginia	C	C	4 of 8	The Same
West Virginia	F	C	4 of 8	Better

Source: *The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Count*, Pew Children's Dental Campaign, [www.pewcenteronthestates.org](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org), May 2011.

**Grading System:** A=6-8 benchmarks B=5 benchmarks C=4 benchmarks D=3 benchmarks F=0-2 benchmarks

In the following pages, we'll summarize the grades given to the states on each policy benchmark. You can see how your state is doing in comparison with other states in the SECA region.

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**Benchmark #1: Share of High-Risk Schools with Sealant Programs 2010**

SECA State	Percentage of High-Risk Schools with Program	Meets or Exceeds National Rate of 25%
Alabama	Less than 25%	NO
Arkansas	Less than 25%	NO
Florida	Less than 25%	NO
Georgia	25-49%	YES
Kentucky	Less than 25%	NO
Louisiana	Less than 25%	NO
Mississippi	Less than 25%	NO
North Carolina	Less than 25%	NO
Oklahoma	0%	NO
South Carolina	50-74%	YES
Tennessee	25-49%	YES
Texas	Less than 25%	NO
Virginia	Less than 25%	NO
West Virginia	25-49%	YES

Source: *The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Count*, Pew Children's Dental Campaign, [www.pewcenteronthestates.org](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org), May 2011.

**Benchmark #2: Hygienists Can Place Sealants Without Prior Dentist's Exam 2010**

SECA State	Yes	No
Alabama		X
Arkansas	X	
Florida		X
Georgia		X
Kentucky		X
Louisiana		X
Mississippi		X
North Carolina		X
Oklahoma	X	
South Carolina	X	
Tennessee		X
Texas		X
Virginia		X
West Virginia		X

Source: *The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Count*, Pew Children's Dental Campaign, [www.pewcenteronthestates.org](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org), May 2011.

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**Benchmark #3: Share of Residents on Fluoridated Community Water Supplies 2008**

SECA State	Percentage	Meets or Exceeds National Rate of 75%
Alabama	82.2%	YES
Arkansas	60.5%	NO
Florida	78.3%	YES
Georgia	95.8%	YES
Kentucky	99.4%	YES
Louisiana	28.3%	NO
Mississippi	54.6%	NO
North Carolina	85.6%	YES
Oklahoma	75.3%	YES
South Carolina	94.4%	YES
Tennessee	91.4%	YES
Texas	78.6%	YES
Virginia	94.9%	YES
West Virginia	90.6%	YES

Source: *The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Count*, Pew Children's Dental Campaign, [www.pewcenteronthestates.org](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org), May 2011.

**Benchmark #4: Share of Medicaid-enrolled Children Getting Dental Care 2009**

SECA State	Percentage	Meets or Exceeds National Rate of 38.1%
Alabama	49.9%	YES
Arkansas	57.1%	YES
Florida	25.7%	NO
Georgia	42.5%	YES
Kentucky	40.8%	YES
Louisiana	41.8%	YES
Mississippi	45.5%	YES
North Carolina	52.1%	YES
Oklahoma	46.0%	YES
South Carolina	51.9%	YES
Tennessee	46.4%	YES
Texas	59.8%	YES
Virginia	45.7%	YES
West Virginia	48.5%	YES

Source: *The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Count*, Pew Children's Dental Campaign, [www.pewcenteronthestates.org](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org), May 2011.

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**Benchmark #5: Share of Dentists' Median Retail Fees Reimbursed by Medicaid 2010**

SECA State	Percentage	Meets or Exceeds National Rate of 60.5%
Alabama	53.6%	NO
Arkansas	63.9%	YES
Florida	27.5%	NO
Georgia	51.9%	NO
Kentucky	51.9%	NO
Louisiana	67.9%	YES
Mississippi	61.9%	YES
North Carolina	55.5%	NO
Oklahoma	64.4%	YES
South Carolina	57.1%	NO
Tennessee	67.3%	YES
Texas	63.8%	YES
Virginia	59.4%	NO
West Virginia	62.5%	YES

Source: *The State of Children's Dental Health: Making Coverage Count*, Pew Children's Dental Campaign, [www.pewcenteronthestates.org](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org), May 2011.

**Benchmark #6: Pays Medical Providers for Early Preventive Dental Health Care 2010**

SECA State	YES	NO
Alabama	X	
Arkansas		X
Florida	X	
Georgia	X	
Kentucky	X	
Louisiana		X
Mississippi	X	
North Carolina	X	
Oklahoma		X
South Carolina	X	
Tennessee		X
Texas	X	
Virginia	X	
West Virginia		X

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**Benchmark #7: Authorizes New Primary Care Dental Providers 2010**

SECA State	YES	NO
Alabama		X
Arkansas		X
Florida		X
Georgia		X
Kentucky		X
Louisiana		X
Mississippi		X
North Carolina		X
Oklahoma		X
South Carolina		X
Tennessee		X
Texas		X
Virginia		X
West Virginia		X

Source: *The State of Children’s Dental Health: Making Coverage Count*, Pew Children’s Dental Campaign, [www.pewcenteronthestates.org](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org), May 2011.

**Benchmark #8: Tracks Data on Children’s Dental Health 2010**

SECA State	YES	NO
Alabama	X	
Arkansas	X	
Florida		X
Georgia	X	
Kentucky	X	
Louisiana	X	
Mississippi	X	
North Carolina		X
Oklahoma	X	
South Carolina	X	
Tennessee		X
Texas	X	
Virginia	X	
West Virginia		X

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## *The Arkansas Story: Going from an “F” to a “C”*

The report highlighted several states that had made strides to improve their scores, and Arkansas was one of those states singled out as having made significant progress.

### **According to the report:**

When Arkansas received an “F” from Pew’s report card in 2010, policymakers seized on the failing grade as an opportunity to reinvigorate the state’s oral health coalition and pursue needed policy changes. *“I looked at Arkansas’ grade and I immediately thought, ‘We can do better than this,’”* said state Senator David Johnson, who helped lead the state’s efforts. One year later, Arkansas’ grade is a “C”.

The state improved its grade because of progress in two areas:

1. The state increased its share of Medicaid children who receive actual dental care, making it one of the top ranking states nationally.
2. The state changed a law that created a hurdle for dental hygienists to place sealants on children’s teeth.

Arkansas is poised to make additional progress because of other laws that its legislature enacted in 2011.

- One of these laws allows pediatricians and other medical personnel to receive Medicaid reimbursement for providing preventive dental services to children.
- Another law will expand water fluoridation to many more communities, extending this cavity protection to an estimated 640,000 additional Arkansans.

*“Policy change is often a test of persistence, and patience is still a virtue,”* said Dr. Lynn Mouden, director of the state’s Office of Oral Health. *“The passage of the fluoridation bill in Arkansas was the culmination of 11 years of work, with the dentists, hygienists, advocates and the state oral health coalition all partnering with our office.”*

*Excerpted from The State of Children’s Dental Health:  
Making Coverage Matter, Arkansas Makes Strides in Dental Health,*

[http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/initiatives\\_detail.aspx?initiativeID=85899360169](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/initiatives_detail.aspx?initiativeID=85899360169)

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