

# EARLY SMILES SACRAMENTO

An innovative public-private partnership dedicated to minimizing the dental disease burden among children in Sacramento

October 2017

## The Dental Disease Epidemic:

- **Nationally**, tooth decay is the **most common chronic disease among children** aged 6 to 11 years despite being 100% preventable
- In **California**, **one in three children** are affected by tooth decay by third grade
- In **Sacramento**, **despite a 100% increase in the utilization** of dental services between 2008 and 2014, **many children** with Denti-Cal (through Geographic Managed Care – GMC) **go without an annual dental visit or preventive care**

I see a lot of nasty teeth! At least once a week, if not more, in every school I go to, I have secretaries saying - can you look at these teeth because the child is complaining that he/she is hurting. It impedes our children's ability to sit in class. It is a huge problem.

- District Nurse, Sacramento

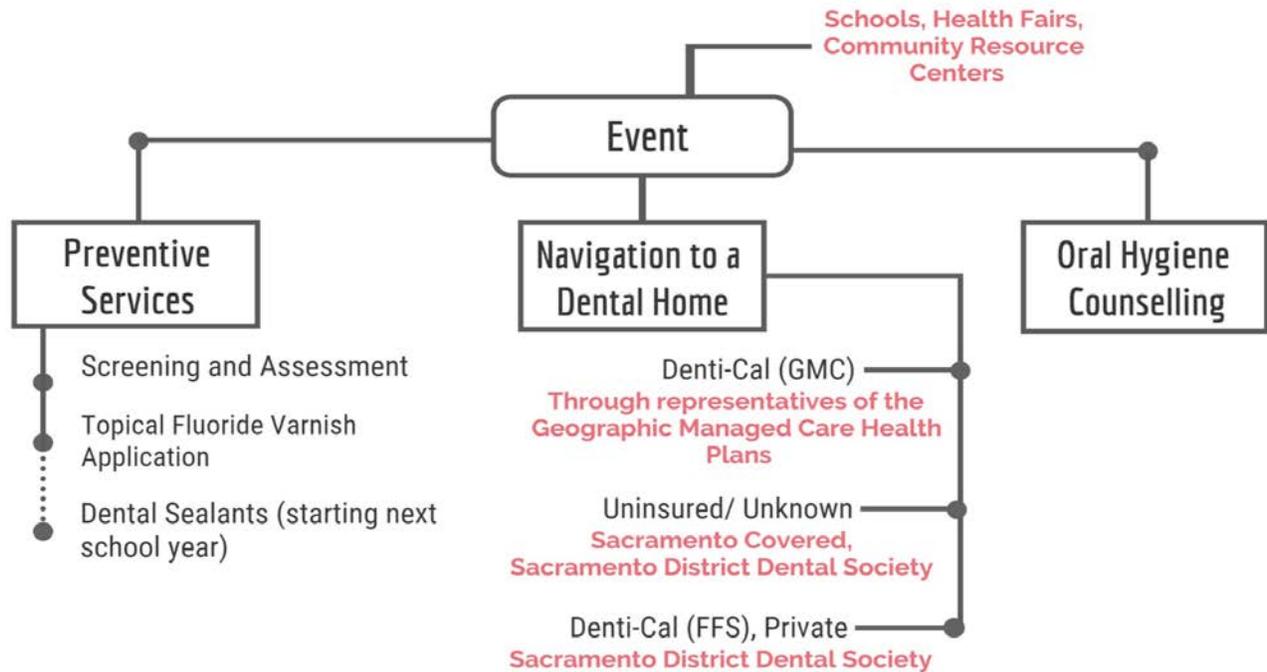
A myriad of issues contributes to the rate of utilization of dental services in Sacramento. Early Smiles Sacramento, a Center for Oral Health program addresses them through a sustainable, school-based approach with the goal of connecting families to their dental provider in a timely and effective manner

## What is Early Smiles Sacramento?

Early Smiles Sacramento is a unique community-based program of the Center for Oral Health that serves the most vulnerable school-aged children in Sacramento county.

Managed care plans in Sacramento –Access Dental, Health Net and Liberty Dental Plan, were tasked by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to identify innovative solutions to eliminate barriers to access to care. The three managed care plans, in collaboration with Center for Oral Health, designed Early Smiles Sacramento. This program brings greater accountability to Denti-Cal; leverages Denti-Cal funds to create a sustainable program; and improves access to care, while keeping children in their classrooms. ESS provides evidence-based preventive dental services and helps navigate every child to a dental home. ESS also provides training to primary care providers to enhance well-child visits with preventive dental care.

The program is advised by a community advisory group. COH also works in close partnership with the school nurses, dental plans, and community partners to ensure timely provision of oral health care.



### How is Early smiles Sacramento unique?

- A public-private partnership to which, high accountability to program success between all parties is integral
- One of the very few school-based oral health programs driven by the aim of achieving Triple Aim.
- Sustainable and responsible from the get-go since the program’s end goal is to connect children to a dental home and foster continued dental care.

### Program Impact

10,461 children served

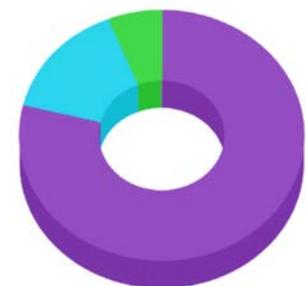
8,891 received Topical Fluoride Varnish Applications

6 school districts    50+ schools    4 Family Resource Center

50+ Community events (like health fairs)

2 Primary Care Provider Trainings on Oral Health

Insurance status of children served



● Denti-Cal (Geographic Managed Care)  
● Private  
● Other, Unknown or Uninsured

## Future work and closing remarks:

- Expand services to other school districts and high-risk students
- Promote integration of medical and dental care by conducting at least 2 more trainings for Primary Care Providers on caries risk assessment and Fluoride Varnish application in the medical office.
- Seek data from the Department of Health Care Services and the Health Plans to further assess program impact on the following metrics – Dental Sealant Rate, Annual Dental Visit Rate, overall dental disease burden among children in Sacramento.
- This program can and must be adapted and duplicated in other counties with high need within California.
- Unbiased analysis of Geographic Managed Care programs and their efforts to improve outreach, patient experience and ultimately, population oral health outcomes is critically important
- Ensuring innovative and fiscally responsible programs and partnerships like Early Smiles Sacramento are supported and sustained is important to improving oral health of communities.

This project is funded by a contract with the three Sacramento Geographic Managed Care Programs – Access Dental Inc, Health Net of California, Inc, and Liberty Dental Plan of California, Inc.

### **About COH:**

The Center for Oral Health was founded in 1985 as The Dental Health Foundation with the goal to serve the State Public Health Department in its quest for stronger policies and deeper understanding of the complex issues that affect access to dental care and to achieving optimum health outcomes.

The Center for Oral Health has been the leading non-profit organization in California raising awareness about oral health. It has trained thousands of healthcare professionals regardless of their dental sciences background and established demonstrations projects that improved access to care for millions of underserved children through innovation, research, education, and advocacy.

The views expressed in this fact sheet do not necessarily reflect the views of the Center for Oral Health. This fact sheet is a work in progress and/or is produced in parallel with other briefs contributing to other work or formal publications by Center for Oral Health. Comments are welcome please direct them to Dr. Conrado Barzaga at [CBarzaga@tc4oh.org](mailto:CBarzaga@tc4oh.org)



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## How are we doing? What our stakeholders are saying!

“ I had a child in my office with 10 decayed teeth in her mouth and was in pain. Nothing had been done for this child since the family was unable to navigate the system by themselves. I then connected the grandmother of the child to Rachel (Early Smiles Sacramento) who, within 4 hours, connected the child to her dentist (through Access Dental) and the child was in the dental chair the next day. ”

- School Nurse

“ Having direct access to the plans and having someone who can come out and actually do the treatment (preventative care - FV application) and then navigation, is life-changing for our kids and our families. ”

- School Nurse

“ The Early Smiles Sacramento (ESS) staff and Danielle (Liberty Dental Plan) have come to our staff meetings, presented to our nurses and, given out their phone numbers and the staff have used them. That same day, they (school staff) had a kid that was in massive pain and they called them (ESS). Not only have Early Smiles Staff gotten them dental treatment that same day, (but) they have gotten them transportation and have been able to translate through the language line. We have never had that kind of access for our families and children. ”

- Director of Programs, School District

“ In smiles for kids, we are seeing less kids for free because they now have dental homes.

The plans are trying, seriously! They have stepped up and are receptive to our (stakeholders) input.

Having Early Smiles Sacramento navigate clients to a dental home after screenings is great – that makes Geographic Managed Care work better.

I cannot speak more highly of them (Early Smiles Sacramento). Having representatives from the plans dedicated to this program is wonderful. ”

- Smiles for Kids  
Sacramento District Dental Society