

NCEF Oral Health Initiative

Since 2006, NCEF has invested \$20,522,187 into the community.

The Issue

Oral Health is essential for child wellbeing, and untreated oral diseases can cause pain, infections and problems with eating and speaking, which impacts a child's ability to learn and grow. Dental caries (tooth decay) is among the most common chronic childhood diseases, ahead of asthma and hay fever. Oral health care is the most prevalent unmet children's health need especially in low-income, minority and rural communities. While oral health faces challenges throughout the United States, the problem is perhaps most challenging in Florida.

Florida was one of just three states receiving an 'F' grade in two consecutive Oral Health Report Cards issued by the Pew Center on the States. The grade was largely due to extremely low Medicaid reimbursement rates, the nation's lowest dental care utilization by Medicaid recipients, the lack of an oral health surveillance system and one of the nation's most restrictive state practice acts on dental hygienists' ability to independently provide preventive services. In addition, more than 20% of Florida's population lives in designated Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas. The number of dentists needed to remove the shortage designation (1,230) is higher than any other state and accounts for 13.36% of the total number of dentists estimated for the entire country (10,716).

Fast Facts*

- In 2020, the Department of Health reported **287 active dentists** in Collier County, but less than **2%** accepted Medicaid patients, thus limiting access to quality care for impoverished children.
- About **1 in 5 (20%) children** aged 5 to 11 years have at least one untreated decayed tooth.
- **1 in 10 (10%) adolescents** aged 12 to 19 years have at least one untreated decayed tooth.
- School sealant programs are highly effective, with every tooth sealed saving **more than \$11** in dental treatment costs.
- Children aged **5 to 19 years** from low-income families are **twice as likely (25%)** to have cavities, compared with children from higher-income households (**11%**).
- On average, **34 million school hours** are lost each year because of unplanned (emergency) dental care, and over **\$45 billion** in US productivity is lost each year due to untreated dental disease.

**Data from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Collaborative Successes

- NCEF spearheaded a unique public-private partnership to build and maintain the **NCEF Pediatric Dental Center** at Florida SouthWestern State College in East Naples, which opened in December 2008 and has since had **195,523 pediatric dental visits**.
- In 2013, NCEF developed Collier County's first **oral health surveillance system** to increase the availability of preventive services in the area, including a school-based dental sealant program for all second-grade children in low socio-economic schools. UF Dental Hygienists conducted screenings for third graders of all public schools in Collier County. **Nearly 3,000 children** are screened each year. The prevalence of dental sealants on permanent first molars among **3rd graders** has increased by **65%**.
- The Center's promotora (health educator) has provided oral health education to **over 9,000 families**.

Meet Avery, Age 9

Avery, age 9, has autism spectrum disorder (ASD), which complicates his dental care. Thankfully, his family found the NCEF Pediatric Dental Center. Initially, he needed to be treated under sedation as he required various teeth restorations and extractions. In 2022, the Center opened a special "sensory room" that helps children like Avery adapt more comfortably to oral health procedures. With each visit, he becomes more cooperative, and the team hopes to slowly transition him to the regular operator.



How your dollars make a difference:

\$50,000 provides 10 children with oral surgery including IV sedation

\$25,000 ensures 50 children receive comprehensive dental exams

\$10,000 provides 600 children with the opportunity to be treated by a pediatric dentist in one month

\$5,000 provides 75 children with dental sealants to prevent decay

\$1,000 enables 175 families to participate in oral health education classes



Strategic Initiative Partners

