



DELTA DENTAL OF ILLINOIS FOUNDATION

Improving Children's Oral Health in Illinois

 DELTA DENTAL®

The State of Children's Oral Health in Illinois

The need for oral health care and education in Illinois is significant. Too many children needlessly suffer from tooth decay, which is a preventable disease.

Tooth decay is the leading chronic infectious disease among children in the US. Cavities can interfere with a child's ability to eat, speak, smile, learn and concentrate, and have the potential to affect a child's overall health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 22.7 percent of two to five year olds in the nation have had cavities, and 55.7 percent of six to eight year olds have had cavities.¹ Statistics are similar in Illinois with 52 percent of Illinois third graders having experienced tooth decay.²



One of the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation's goals is to educate children and their caregivers as well as the dental community about the benefits of preventive care, starting at an early age and continuing into adulthood.

Because the Foundation is engaged in improving the health of Illinois' children and their families, we continually monitor children's oral health on a state level as well as a national level.

Every two years, Delta Dental of Illinois conducts the Children's Oral Health Survey, which asks caregivers about oral health behaviors and attitudes of their children. The feedback we receive helps us better understand children's oral health habits and allows us to address the oral health needs in the state. Here's what we discovered about Illinois children:



More than **1 in 4** Illinois children had at least one cavity in the past year.



Only **56%** of Illinois children's teeth are brushed twice a day.



Only **52%** of Illinois children who have visited the dentist have gone twice in the past 12 months.



44% of caregivers of children who have teeth report their children's teeth are never flossed.

The results from the Children's Oral Health Survey demonstrate the state's need for oral health education. The Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation executes education and awareness programs with an emphasis on preventive care in areas of the state with the most need and where the greatest impact can be made. By educating Illinois communities about the importance of preventive care and oral health care in general, we hope to reduce the prevalence of tooth decay and oral health issues among children and their families.

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db191.pdf>

² http://www.heartlandalliance.org/oralhealth/research--reports/healthy-smiles-healthy-growth_final.pdf



Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation: Meeting the Need in Illinois

As the 501(c)(3) charitable arm of Delta Dental of Illinois, the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation was formed in 2008 with the mission to improve oral health in Illinois. Located in Naperville, the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation accomplishes this mission by expanding oral health education and awareness, and increasing access to oral health care.



The Foundation's current focus is on children since childhood is the time when oral health habits and lessons should be established.

Oral Health Education and Awareness

The Foundation works to increase oral health education and awareness in Illinois through its own programs and its partnerships with other oral health organizations. The Foundation's programs and partnerships emphasize the importance of good oral health and preventive care and how oral health is connected to overall health. Cavities are the most prevalent childhood disease, but through education and awareness, the Foundation is able to teach children and their caregivers good oral health habits, helping to create a healthier community.

Access to Oral Health Care

We partner with and provide support to Illinois organizations and programs that help expand access to oral health care. Through these organizations and our own dental care events, the Foundation is able to provide preventive treatment and restorative care to underserved children who may be suffering from tooth decay. Through these efforts, we are able to address the prevalence of dental disease among Illinois children, and we are able to improve their oral health as well as their overall health.

Education for Oral Health Professionals

As a way to meet oral health care needs in the state, the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation provides educational opportunities for oral health professionals. We offer continuing education courses through our "Dentist By 1" program, which teaches the importance of early dental visits and how to provide dental care to young children. The Foundation also supports organizations that have a focus on expanding oral health education, including programs that instruct dentists how to best treat patients with special needs.

How We Improve Oral Health in Illinois

Through our initiatives, we bring oral health education and assistance to Illinois children and families in a variety of ways. From awarding grants to visiting schools, the Foundation reaches communities throughout Illinois.

Land of Smiles

This free and engaging children’s educational program teaches pre-kindergarten through third grade students the importance of good oral health habits.



Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease. More than half of Illinois third graders have had at least one cavity. To help combat the prevalence of tooth decay among Illinois children, “Land of Smiles” travels throughout the state, reaching more than 30,000 children each year. During the interactive show, the Tooth Wizard and PlaqueMan explain good oral health care techniques, good and bad foods for the teeth, and why it is important to visit the dentist.

Each year, we evaluate a portion of students who attend the “Land of Smiles” program by asking questions before and after the presentation. Our 2013-14 results show significant changes in the students’ oral health-related knowledge.

Select pre-kindergarten through third grade student evaluation results for the 2013-2014 Land of Smiles program	Percent correct (Pre-test)	Percent correct (Post-test)
Grades PK-1		
“Flossing is good for my teeth.”	87%	96%
“Germs can hurt my teeth.”	77%	89%
Grades 2-3		
“Should kids use floss every day?”	81%	95%
“Should kids use mouth rinse?”	78%	94%
“Is plaque good for teeth?”	60%	96%

“Yesterday our school was privileged to have Land of Smiles visit us. I say privileged because they were absolutely wonderful! The entire school cannot stop talking about it. I have had parents tell me that their child came home last night very excited. I have had students telling me all morning that they flossed last night.”

– School Nurse



Dentist By 1™

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that a child visit the dentist within six months of getting the first tooth – and no later than the first birthday. Despite this recommendation, children in Illinois don't see their family dentist on average until they are 3 ½ years old.

To educate caregivers about the importance of starting oral health habits early and visiting the dentist by age 1, the Foundation launched the “Dentist By 1” program.

As part of the program, parents can take a pledge to take their child to the dentist by age 1 at dentistby1.com/illinois. In exchange, they will receive an oral health kit for their child and the Foundation will donate an oral health kit on their behalf to a child in need.

The “Dentist By 1” program also includes training for oral health professionals throughout the state. These trainings teach participants the components of a pediatric dental exam and help increase their comfort level with treating young patients.

In addition, the “Dentist By 1” program includes a one-day community service event where dental professionals provide free exams and cleanings to young children ages 5 and under. Families who attend the event are provided with oral health education materials and receive referrals for additional care and to establish a dental home.



Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation wisdom tooth award



The \$100,000 annual Wisdom Tooth Award recognizes an Illinois nonprofit organization that demonstrates a commitment and dedication to improving oral health in the state.

The selected organization must have made a significant impact on improving oral health among Illinois children with a proven effort that provides oral health education and/or access to oral health care in Illinois. This prestigious award provides recognition as well as financial support, which eases the burden of dental care costs and increases the amount of care these organizations can deliver.

In-Kind Donations

Every year, the Foundation and Delta Dental of Illinois provide more than 250,000 oral health kits to Illinois residents and Delta Dental of Illinois members. The kits include toothbrushes, floss, toothpaste, and oral health brochures. We also offer oral health educational materials, such as flyers and posters. Nonprofit organizations in Illinois can apply to receive oral health kits from the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation. To qualify for an in-kind donation, an organization must serve individuals with limited or no access to oral health resources.

The Foundation provides community grants to nonprofit organizations that focus on improving oral health among Illinois residents.

Our community grants program provides funding to organizations that provide oral health care and/or education. With the help of our community grant recipients, we are able to improve access to care in all areas of the state.

Help Us Ensure More Illinois Children Get the Dental Care They Need

Please consider making a donation to the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation.

At Delta Dental of Illinois, we believe that establishing good oral health habits at an early age can set the stage for a lifetime of good oral health. We are advocates for preventive care, and through our education efforts, we are able to help eliminate the need for more serious oral health treatment among children.

When you make a donation to the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation, you help us reach more children and provide them with the education and oral health care they need. Your donation can bring a “Land of Smiles” show to an elementary school, help a child get treatment for tooth decay, provide special training for dentists through the “Dentist By 1” program and more. Donations are essential to us carrying out our mission to improve the oral health of Illinois residents. With your help, we are able to spread healthy smiles throughout the state.



95% of the donations received are directly used to fund oral health programs, and donations to the Foundation are tax deductible.

YOU CAN DONATE TO THE FOUNDATION IN THREE EASY WAYS:



Make a secure online donation.
Visit ddilsite.com/foundation.



Mail a completed donation form
along with a check to:

Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation
111 Shuman Blvd.
Naperville, IL 60563



Call 630-718-4764 to make
a donation by phone.

Donate today and help make a difference in the lives of Illinois children.



The mission of the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation is to improve the oral health of Illinois residents, specifically children.



Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation
111 Shuman Boulevard
Naperville, IL 60563

deltadentalil.com/ddilfoundation