

“Land of Smiles” Program Fact Sheet

About “Land of Smiles”

- “Land of Smiles,” an interactive oral health educational program, is offered by Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation, free of charge to Illinois elementary schools statewide. This program supports the Foundation’s mission to improve oral health in the state by teaching Illinois children the importance of oral health and how to take care of their teeth in an effort to prevent decay and cavities. Although largely preventable, tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease affecting children ages 6 to 11.
- Childhood is the time when good oral health habits should begin. Education is the key to prevention and helping establish a lifetime of good oral health. “Land of Smiles” focuses on education in a manner that is easy for children to understand and apply in their lives.
- Two characters, Tooth Wizard and PlaqueMan, interactively teach the value and practice of brushing, flossing and rinsing with fluoride. They also discuss good and bad foods for teeth. In addition, they remind children why it is important to visit the dentist at least twice a year.
- This fall, the program will be presented to nearly 13,000 pre-kindergarten through third-grade students in 69 Illinois elementary schools. This year, the program will have reached nearly 45,000 Illinois children.

Continued Benefits for Students

- Every child who attends the performance receives a “Land of Smiles” bag containing a toothbrush, toothpaste, floss and oral health tips in English and Spanish explaining how to take care of their teeth.
- Each school receives a “Land of Smiles” curriculum kit to help educators reinforce good oral health habits with their students throughout the year. The kit has educational tools, including books and an oversized mouth model and toothbrush, to demonstrate proper brushing techniques.

Measurable Land of Smiles Results

- The Land of Smiles program has a measurable impact on Illinois children. According to pre- and post-tests given to children who attended a show in 2015:
 - Only 81 percent of students thought that flossing was good for teeth before seeing the Land of Smiles performance, compared with 95 percent after the show.
 - Only 16 percent of students knew how to correctly brush their teeth before the show, compared to 77 percent after the show.
 - Seventy percent of students knew that plaque was bad for teeth before the show, compared with 98 percent after the show.
 - Only 76 percent thought they should use fluoride rinse before the show, compared with 94 percent after the show.
 - Eighty-three percent of students were able to name two foods that are good for teeth before the show, compared with 92 percent after the show.

Oral Health Trends among Illinois Children

- According to the *2016 Delta Dental of Illinois Children’s Oral Health Survey*, one in five (21 percent) of Illinois kids ages 6 to 12 missed school last year due to a dental problem.
- The *2016 Delta Dental of Illinois Children’s Oral Health Survey* also found 29 percent of Illinois children had at least one cavity in the past year and 35 percent of Illinois children visited the dentist only one time or fewer in the past year.

- In addition, it's recommended that children brush their teeth twice daily for two minutes and floss daily. The survey found only 60 percent of Illinois children brush their teeth two or more times a day; one in three (34 percent) brush for less than two minutes; and 27 percent floss daily.
- According to the *2013-2014 Healthy Smiles Healthy Growth* assessment conducted by the Chicago Community Oral Health Forum (CCOHF), 52 percent of Illinois third-graders have had a cavity. Two percent of third-graders urgently need dental treatment.
- The 2013-2014 *Healthy Smiles Healthy Growth* assessment also found that more than 22 percent of Illinois third-graders had untreated tooth decay. Those numbers vary by income and for racial/ethnic groups.
 - Twenty-six percent of children eligible for the Free and Reduced Meal Program had untreated tooth decay compared to just 16 percent of non-eligible children.
 - Twenty-nine percent of African American third-graders had untreated tooth decay compared with 27 percent of Asian students, 21 of Latino students and 19 percent of white students.

About Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation

- Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
- Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation's mission is to improve the oral health of people in Illinois, with an emphasis on children.
- Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation recognizes that many children and their families do not know how to properly prevent tooth decay and how to improve and maintain their oral health and overall health.
- Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation supports programs that provide oral health education and access. "Land of Smiles" is the Foundation's own program that works to improve oral health by focusing on prevention through education.
- Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation accepts public donations. All donations are tax deductible and 95 percent of donations are used to fund the Foundation's oral health programs. In 2016, any individual, company or organization can become a Land of Smiles sponsor and bring the program to a school for a donation of \$1,500. Illinois elementary schools already scheduled can be sponsored or new schools can be requested and added based on availability.
- For more information on Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation, visit <https://www.deltadentalil.com/ddilfoundation>.