

## 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 to their overall health and well being, and how to care for their teeth in an effort to prevent tooth decay and other oral health complications. Although largely preventable, the U.S. Surgeon General identifies tooth decay as the most common chronic childhood disease affecting children.
- Childhood is the time when good oral health habits should begin. Education is the key to preventing oral health disease and establishing a lifetime of healthy smiles. Land of Smiles focuses on educating in a manner that is easy for children to understand and apply to their lives.
- Two characters, Tooth Wizard and PlaqueMan, interactively teach the value and practice of brushing, flossing and using fluoride rinse. They also discuss good and bad foods for overall health. In addition, they remind children why it is important to visit the dentist regularly.
- In 2018, the Land of Smiles program will reach nearly 38,000 pre-kindergarten through third-grade students in nearly 175 Illinois elementary schools throughout the state. The program has reached over 330,000 students at more than 800 Illinois schools in the past 10 years.

### Continued Benefits for Students

- Every child who attends the performance receives a Land of Smiles oral health kit with 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 students throughout the year. The kit has educational tools, including books and an oversized mouth model and toothbrush, to demonstrate proper brushing techniques.

### Measureable 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 during the 2016/2017 school year:
  - Only 76 percent of pre-kindergarten through first-grade students thought flossing was good for teeth before seeing the Land of Smiles performance, compared with 93 percent after the show.
  - Only 10 percent of pre-kindergarten through first-grade students knew how often to brush their teeth before the show, compared to 75 percent after the show.
  - Sixty-four percent of second- and third-grade students knew that plaque was bad for teeth before the show, compared to 96 percent after the show.
  - Only 75 percent of second- and third-grade students thought they should use fluoride rinse before the show, compared with 89 percent after the show.
  - Eighty-four percent of second- and third-grade students were able to name two foods that are good for teeth before the show, compared with 90 percent after the show.

### Oral Health Trends Among Illinois Children

- According to the 2016 *Oral Health in Illinois* report, sponsored by Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation, 22 percent of Illinois third-graders have untreated tooth decay.<sup>1</sup>

- The report also found that one third of Illinois children in rural areas have untreated tooth decay. Illinois children living in poverty are five times more likely to have fair or poor oral health. And just over half of children on Medicaid saw a dentist in the past year.<sup>1</sup>
  - For more information about the 2016 *Oral Health in Illinois* report, visit [oralhealthillinois.org](http://oralhealthillinois.org).
- According to the 2017 *Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey*, nearly half of Illinois kids ages 6 to 12 have missed school due to dental problems in the past 12 months.<sup>2</sup>
- The 2017 *Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey* also found 35 percent of Illinois children had at least one cavity in the past year, and 34 percent of Illinois children visited the dentist only one time or fewer in the past year.<sup>2</sup>
- In addition, it's recommended that children brush their teeth twice daily for two minutes and floss daily. The survey found only 64 percent of Illinois children brush their teeth two or more times a day; and only 26 percent floss daily.<sup>2</sup>
- 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.<sup>3</sup>

#### About Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation

- Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
- The 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 cavities 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 signature program that works to improve oral health by focusing on prevention through education.
- Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation accepts donations. All donations are tax deductible. In 2018, 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 [deltadentalil.com/ddilfoundation](http://deltadentalil.com/ddilfoundation).

<sup>1</sup>*Oral Health in Illinois Report, 2016.*

<sup>2</sup>*Kelton, a leading global insights firm, conducted the 2017 Delta Dental of Illinois Children's Oral Health Survey. Interviews were conducted statewide via email with 155 Illinois parents of children ages 12 and under. For results based on the total sample of Illinois adults, the margin of error is +/- 7.9% at a 95 percent confidence level.*

<sup>3</sup>*Oral Health Forum, Healthy Smile Healthy Growth Assessment, 2013-2014.*