Advancing Children's Oral Health: The Impact of Medicaid Dental Sealant Expansion in Michigan

Alaina White-Radcliffe, MPH[1]
Andrea Whittaker, RDH, BS, MPA[1]
Sarah Clark, MPH[2]

[1] The Michigan Oral Health Program, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)
[2] Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Center at the University of Michigan

INTRODUCTION

Effective Jan. 1, 2023, the Michigan Medicaid Program broadened dental sealant coverage for beneficiaries 0-21. In addition to the existing coverage of permanent molars, coverage was expanded to include:

- First and second primary molars.
- First and second permanent premolars.

This aligns policy with evidence-based recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and principles of Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT).

OBJECTIVE

Medicaid claims data was analyzed to assess the impact of the 2023 policy change on receipt of sealants among Medicaid-enrolled children in Michigan.

METHODS

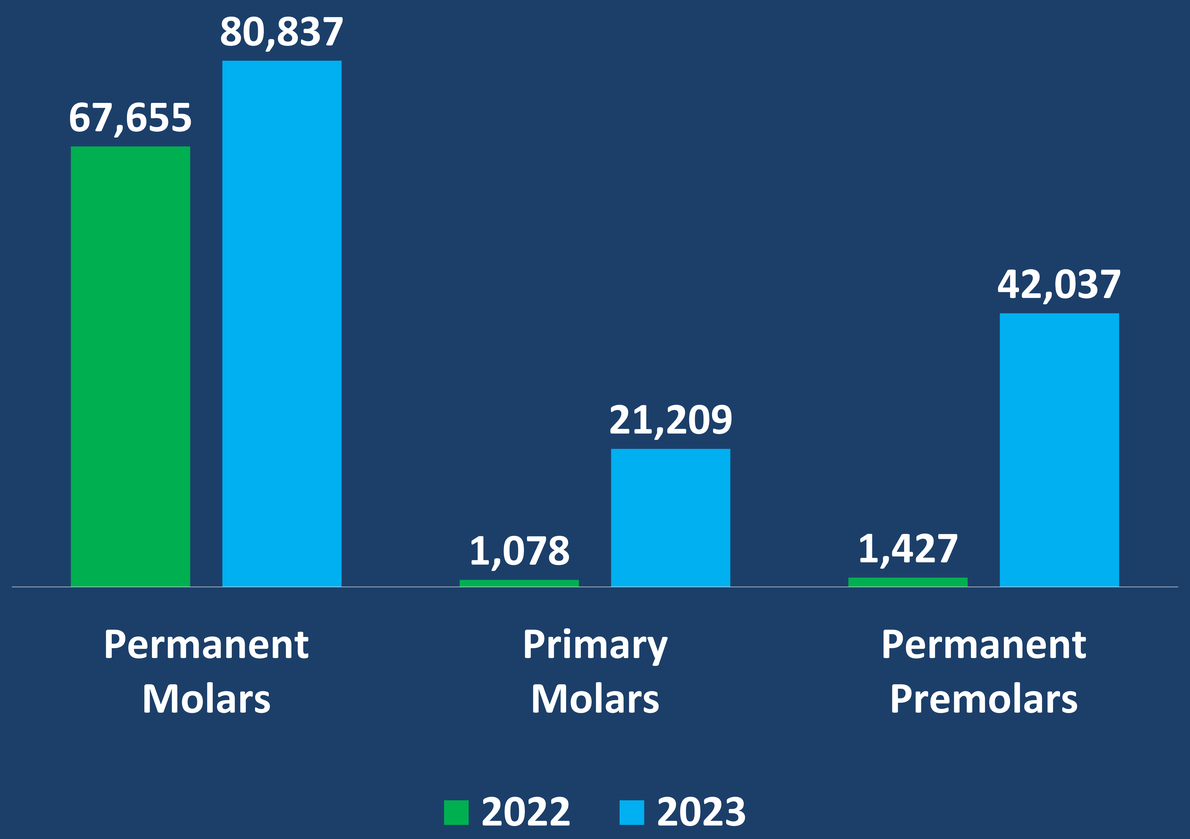
Study Population:

- ✓ Beneficiaries between ages 0-21 years as of last day of calendar year.
- ✓ Beneficiaries with ≥11 months of enrollment in the year.

Dental claims were extracted from Medicaid administrative files to identify sealants placed in CY2022 (baseline) and CY2023 (first year under expanded sealant coverage).

- Overall proportion of children receiving ≥ 1 sealant in the year.
- By type of tooth (permanent molars, primary molars, premolars).
- By age group (0-4, 5-8, 9-12, 13-20).
- By race/ethnicity (Hispanic, non-Hispanic Black, non-Hispanic white, other/unknown).

The proportion of Medicaid-enrolled children who received ≥1 dental sealant increased significantly in 2023 after the expansion of Medicaid dental coverage in Michigan.



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RESULTS

- Preliminary 2023 data shows an increase in the percentage of children receiving at least one sealant, rising from 6% to 10% following the policy change.
- Newly covered teeth saw significant growth in sealant placement, with a 1,900% increase in children receiving at least one sealant on a primary molar and a 3,800% increase in children receiving at least one sealant on a permanent premolar.
- The percentage of children from underrepresented populations (non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic) who received at least one sealant increased by approximately 75%, demonstrating improved equitable access to oral health care for Medicaid beneficiaries..
- Significant increases were also observed across all age groups. Beneficiaries between the ages of 5-8 saw the largest increase in sealant placement, with about 25,000 children receiving at least one sealant on a permanent premolar in 2023 compared to 500 children in 2022.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE SEALANT PLACEMENT

- A map will be developed to identify counties with the SEAL! Michigan school-based dental sealant programs and explore expansion into areas lacking access to care.
- The nationally recognized Michigan Model for Health curriculum, which provides PreK-12 students with skills-based health education, will include an updated oral health flyer with sealant information, widely used by instructors in 43 states.
- A new dental sealant flyer will be developed as part of the SEAL! Michigan school-based program to enhance parent and caregiver education on the benefits of sealants and encourage more students to enroll in the no-cost sealant program.

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