

INSIDE I-SMILE

2024 Update
on Children's
Oral Health

I-Smile is a statewide program in Iowa that connects children and families with dental, medical, and community resources to ensure a lifetime of health and wellness. It increases dental care access by building community partnerships, providing outreach to dental and medical providers, and creating opportunities to identify dental needs early. I-Smile provides care coordination to address barriers families experience when seeking dental care and provides gap-filling services at locations like schools and WIC clinics, ensuring children can thrive.



Partnership Spotlight

Moms need healthy mouths for their baby's health as well as their own. In 2024, the Iowa HHS I-Smile team partnered with the Family Planning program to pilot an oral health education project in the Allen Hospital (Waterloo) Family Planning clinic. Clients who were pregnant or planning to conceive in the next year received education from clinic staff about the importance of oral health before, during, and after pregnancy; the benefits of regular dental visits; and proper oral care for newborns. The project is expanding to other clinics in the state.

Children's Oral Health in Iowa



SFY24 I-Smile Program Data

18%

of children receiving an oral screening from I-Smile in 2024 had active **tooth decay**

65,976

children received **care coordination** from I-Smile for dental care in 2024

72%

of children receiving I-Smile services are on **Medicaid** or **Hawki** or pay for dental care **out-of-pocket**

43,162

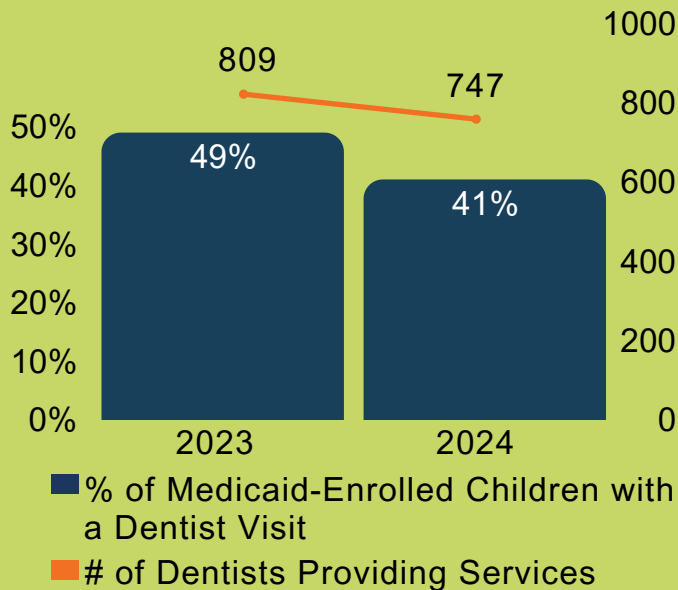
children received preventive dental services, like dental screenings and fluoride varnish, from I-Smile dental hygienists and nurses, in locations such as WIC clinics and childcare centers in 2024

>6X

as many children received preventive dental services from I-Smile in 2024 than in 2005, the year before the I-Smile program started

Challenge: Fewer Dentists Seeing Children on Medicaid

Worsening Access to Dentists for Medicaid-Enrolled Children in 2024



SFY24 Iowa Medicaid Paid Claims

In 2024, only 41% of children ages 0-12 on Medicaid received care from a dentist, compared to 68% of children on Hawki. Dentists often cite low reimbursement from Medicaid as a reason they opt out of participating. Reimbursement rates for Hawki are higher than Medicaid, which likely contributes to improved access to dentists for Hawki-enrolled children. Policy changes could close the gap in dental care access for Medicaid-enrolled children, ensuring they receive timely, preventive and restorative care to reduce dental disease and improve their overall health.

SFY24 Iowa Medicaid Paid Claims

Success: I-Smile Filling the Gap for Ages 0-2

12% more children ages 0-2 received preventive dental services from I-Smile in 2024 than in 2023

From 2023 to 2024, the number of Medicaid-enrolled children aged 0-2 receiving care from dentists and Federally Qualified Health Centers dropped by 29% and 13%, respectively. To try to fill those gaps, I-Smile provided preventive care for 12% more Medicaid-enrolled children aged 0-2 in 2024 than in 2023.

SFY24 Iowa Medicaid Paid Claims

