School-Based Dental Sealant Programs (SBSPs)

The Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends school-based sealant delivery programs based on strong evidence of effectiveness in preventing dental caries (tooth decay) among children. This recommendation is based on evidence that shows these programs increase the number of children who receive sealants at school, and that dental sealants result in a large reduction in tooth decay among school-aged children (ages 5 to 16).


School-based dental sealant programs (SBSPs) in Ohio typically:

- Provide dental sealants to children in school settings.
- Target schools where 40% or more of the students are eligible for the Free/Reduced Price Meals Program.
- Target second and sixth grades.
- With parental consent, have dental hygienist/dental assistant teams place sealants.
- Use portable dental equipment.
- Check the sealants of third- and seventh-grade students who received sealants in second or sixth grades.

Percentage of Third Grade Students With at Least One Dental Sealant, Ohio, 1998-2018

Data from five statewide surveys of Ohio third grade school children show that the prevalence of dental sealants has increased since 1998-99. At 48%, Ohio far exceeds the national benchmark for the percentage of children with one or more sealants (42.5%).
Ohio Sealant Programs Over the Years

- Cincinnati City Health Department initiated the first Ohio SBSP in 1984.
- Since 1987, ODH has had a grant program to support SBSPs, focusing on highly urbanized and very rural areas. Grantees are local agencies and organizations.
- During the 2019-2020 school year, nearly 12,464 children received sealants through the SBSPs that receive all or part of their funding from ODH.

Resources for School-Based Dental Sealant Programs

The Oral Health Program (OHP) offers a web-based continuing education course on SBSPs. The OHP developed and offers the School-Based Dental Sealant Program Manual which provides detailed information on the expectations of, and standards for, ODH-funded SBSPs. ODH-funded SBSPs must comply with the requirements in this manual. The manual and other resources may be found on the OHP page of the ODH website.