



# Hawai'i Primary Care Association

Beth Giesting, CEO, 808-791-7820, [bgiesting@hawaiiipca.net](mailto:bgiesting@hawaiiipca.net)

## Community Health Centers and Oral Health

Statistics on children's oral health show a national problem that is greatly magnified in Hawai'i. Hawai'i's children have significantly more unmet dental needs, more baby-bottle tooth decay, and more decayed and filled teeth than the national average. Preventive services are lacking: Hawai'i does not enhance its public water with fluoride, except as mandated on military reservations. The rate of dental sealant applications also lags. The data reported by the State of Hawai'i Dental Health Division is shown in the table below.

An estimated 250,000 – 300,000 Hawai'i residents have no dental insurance. Another 200,000 have Med-QUEST coverage, and about half of these are children. Under the QUEST program, children have excellent dental benefits – but extremely limited access. The Department of Human Services spent more than a million dollars last year just to transport children (and a parent) from Neighbor Islands, where providers who accept Med-QUEST patients are few, to O'ahu to get care.

### CHC growth

Fortunately, Community Health Centers (CHCs) have been steadily expanding their dental capacity. In 2007, seven CHCs served 19,879 patients; by 2009 eleven CHCs will offer this service. Supporting the growth of health center dental services is a dental residency program based in CHCs across the state. Since 2002, this program has trained 27 dentists, eight of whom have remained in Hawai'i and continue to work at CHCs.

Clearly, the need for accessible dentistry remains a critical need. CHCs will be working to add a **pediatric dental residency** to the current general community dentistry training program. We need legislative support to adjust the State's temporary dental licensing provision to accommodate pediatric dental residents for the duration of their 2-year training program.

	Decayed or filled primary teeth, 5-9 year olds	Baby Bottle Tooth Decay, 5 year olds	Unmet treatment needs, 8 year olds	8 year olds with sealants
US Average*	1.884	Est. 5%	Est. 29%	Est. 23%
Hawai'i Average*	3.910	13.7%	36%	20.4%
Hawai'i Co.	3.428	8.4%	30.0%	19.0%
O'ahu	3.898	14.2%	37.9%	14.2%
Kaua'i	4.123	13.6%	26.8%	21.6%
Moloka'i	4.035	16.3%	39.1%	35.1%
Maui	4.259	13.5%	36.0%	12.5%
Lāna'i	5.034	23.3%	33.0%	5.9%
Native Hawaiian	4.189	13.9%	39.6%	20.3%
Korean	4.224	21.0%	36.3%	19.3%
Samoaan	4.483	22.7%	63.4%	17.8%
Tongan	4.622	18.7%	65.2%	8.8%
Other Pacific Islander	4.544	21.1%	62.4%	16.7%
Filipino	5.414	24.6%	45.4%	16.8%
Other Southeast Asian	5.046	23.7%	48.0%	30.7%

\*The US Average dates back to 1987. All Hawai'i data are from 1999.