



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
STEVEN M. COSTANTINO, SECRETARY

Department of Children, Youth & Families · Department of Health ·
Department of Human Services · Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals

PRESS RELEASE

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RI's Medicaid Dental Program for Children, RIte Smiles, marks 5th year

RIte Smiles, Rhode Island's Medicaid oral health program for children that currently has more than 55,000 children up to age 11 enrolled, celebrates its 5th birthday tomorrow, September 1. Administered by UnitedHealthcare Dental, RIte Smiles is designed to increase access to dental care and promote preventive and primary dental care so that, in the long run, there will be a decrease of Medicaid expenditures for more costly restorative and emergency dental care.

Recent results of the program demonstrate that, in fact, kids are getting to the dentist more and the number of preventive visits is up since the inception of RIte Smiles. In 2006, there were approximately 27 dental providers in Rhode Island who offered dental care to the bulk of the children on Medicaid. Now, with RIte Smiles, 202 dentists in more than 380 locations throughout the state deliver dental services to children on Medicaid.

"In the past, access was a major barrier to children receiving Medicaid getting routine dental care, or any dental services at all," Steven Costantino, Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services said. "We are greatly pleased with the enormous increase of dental providers in our state, under RIte Smiles. While kids' access to dental care is still a significant problem nationwide, we've made great strides in the five years that RIte Smiles has been operating. We look forward to the continuing success of this valuable and vital program."

The Pew Center on the States recently reported that only 44 percent of Medicaid-enrolled children in the United States receive any dental services annually, meaning that an estimated 16.5 million kids go without basic dental care each year. New data shows that Rhode Island is doing much better than the national average. From 2002 to 2010, the participation rate of children from three to five years old went from 35 to 46 percent, a 31 percent increase. During that same time period, the participation rate of children from six to eight went from 50 to 64 percent while the rate for children aged nine and ten jumped from 57 to 71 percent.

Each year, another group of children will age into the RIte Smiles Program. In order to participate in RIte Smiles, children must have been born after May 1, 2000 and must be eligible for Medicaid.

For more information, see www.dhs.ri.gov.

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