MAKING SMILES HAPPEN*: 2016 ORAL HEALTH STUDY OF KENTUCKY’S YOUTH
Where are we? What can be done? Who can help?

THE STUDY:
Delta Dental of Kentucky partnered with Kentucky Youth Advocates and the University of Louisville School of Dentistry through the Making Smiles Happen® initiative to conduct a new statewide survey of children’s oral health. We sent a dentist to 60 schools across five regions of the state to directly observe the mouths of 3rd and 6th graders. We also asked parents about family oral health history, collecting data for over 2,000 students. The result is a long overdue picture of children’s oral health in Kentucky.

KEY FINDINGS:
The percentage of 3rd and 6th graders in need of dental care has increased since 2001. Two out of five 3rd and 6th graders have untreated cavities. Over half of 3rd and 6th graders do not have sealants.

Socioeconomic status is a significant factor in 3rd and 6th graders’ oral health. Children in low-income families are more likely to not have visited a dentist in a year or more, to experience a toothache, to have tooth decay, and have urgent dental care needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
- DEVELOP: Develop comprehensive goals and objectives for a statewide oral health plan.
- LAUNCH: Launch regional networks to develop local, data-driven solutions.
- ESTABLISH: Establish school-based sealant programs in all high needs schools.
- PROMOTE: Promote oral health literacy campaigns.
- COLLECT: Regularly collect state and county-level oral health data.

Find the complete report and learn more about how you can help at KentuckyOralHealth.com.
1 of 2 3rd and 6th graders in the Western region — or 11,700 children — have untreated tooth decay.

2 of 3 3rd and 6th graders — roughly 13,400 children — in the Central region have cavities.

1 of 5 3rd and 6th graders in the Eastern region — around 5,400 children — need urgent dental care.

Over half of 3rd and 6th graders in the Northern region — roughly 7,000 children — do not have sealants on any permanent molars.

1 of 3 3rd and 6th graders — around 6,600 children — in the Louisville region have previously treated decay.

Making Smiles Happen: 2016 Oral Health Study of Kentucky’s Youth Regions