



PEW REPORT ON DENTAL CARE (PEW is a charitable trust set up by the Sun Oil Company founder Joseph N. Pew and his wife, Mary Anderson Pew). Their work provides a constructive framework by permitting all sides to base their cases on a common set of facts. His goal is to 'tell the truth and trust the people". His approach is that the power of knowledge solves some of today's most challenging problems for the public good in a fact-based and nonpartisan way. This organization also played a key role in addressing the problem of global climate change, the project accumulated incontrovertible evidence on this evolving environmental phenomenon. The scientific data and other peer-reviewed studies were so convincing that in 2005 the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and 10 of its foreign counterparts issued a joint statement that essentially ended the debate on whether climate change was occurring.

These are the results of the PEW report on Dental Care:

Six states merited "A" grades: Connecticut, Iowa, Maryland, New Mexico, Rhode Island and South Carolina. These states met at least six of the eight policy benchmarks and had policies in place that met or exceeded the national performance standards.

Nine states received a grade of "B": Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, New Hampshire, Ohio, Texas and Washington.

Nineteen states and California received a grade of "C" because they met four or fewer of the eight policy benchmarks.

Six states and the District of Columbia earned a "D" grade: Alabama, Indiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada and Utah.

Nine states earned an "F," meeting only one or two policy benchmarks: Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, New Jersey, Hawaii, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Wyoming.

No state met all eight targets. New Jersey ranked lowest in the nation, meeting only one benchmark.

The Pew report highlights what it calls four "proven solutions" that can improve both the dental health of children and their access to care:

. Sealants -- protective coatings applied to the teeth by a dentist or hygienist -- cost one third as much as filling a cavity and have been shown to prevent 60 percent of cavities. "School-based programs are the most cost-effective strategy for providing sealants to disadvantaged children, yet this strategy is vastly underutilized," the report says.

. Water fluoridation counteracts tooth decay and strengthens teeth, says the report. Fluoride occurs naturally in water, but the level varies within states and across the country. "In addition to being the most far-reaching preventive measure states can enact, fluoridation also offers an unmatched return on investment, saving \$38 in dental treatment costs for every dollar spent," it says. About 30 percent of the population on community water systems does not yet receive fluoridated water.

. Medicaid improvements could enable and motivate more dentists to treat low-income children, says the report. Only 38 percent of Medicaid-eligible children received dental care in 2007, largely because too few dentists are willing to treat them, it says. The number of children receiving dental services more than doubled over just four years in several states that have increased Medicaid reimbursement rates.

. New workforce models can expand the number of qualified dental providers who can fill the unmet needs of children. A growing number of states are exploring innovative models that increase the involvement of physicians, hygienists, and new types of dental professionals, the report says.