



# Florence County Health Department

501 Lake Ave PO Box 410 Florence, Wisconsin 54121 715-528-4837  
A.Seibold, RN, MS Health Officer/Director



## NEWS RELEASE

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Sidnie Graff

**Florence County Health Department**

**715-528-3427**

**FAX 715-528-5269**

**sgraff@florencecountywi.gov**

### School Based Dental Care

As the 2024-2025 school year gets underway, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is marking the 25th year of its successful [Wisconsin Seal-A-Smile program](#), which brings preventive dental services to children of all ages statewide. Led by DHS, in collaboration with the [Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin](#) and Delta Dental of Wisconsin Foundation, the program provided care to more than 86,300 students during the 2023-2024 school year totaling an estimated \$17,554,000 in dental services.

"Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease experienced during childhood," said Dr. Russell Dunkel, Wisconsin State Dental Director and DHS Chief Dental Officer. "Cavities not only cause pain and discomfort, which makes eating or concentrating in class difficult, but can impact a child's overall health. By bringing preventive dental services to students at schools we are not only improving access to preventive dental care and teaching good oral hygiene habits, but we are reducing the time students spend away from the classroom and preventing life-long health concerns."

Students with poor oral health are three times more likely to miss school due to dental pain and more likely to perform worse in school. In addition, poor oral health is linked to other chronic conditions later in life including diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

The 2022-2023 Healthy Smiles Survey found three in five third graders in Wisconsin had at least one molar that needs a sealant and one in four third graders had untreated tooth decay or cavities. Dental sealants can prevent eight out of 10 cavities in the back teeth, where most cavities occur.

Wisconsin Seal-A-Smile provides preventive services like dental sealants and fluoride varnish treatments to children in participating schools. These services are conveniently provided during school and are free to all students regardless of insurance status. Seal-A-Smile also provides oral health education and case management for students needing to find care.

Twenty-seven local programs across the state participate in Wisconsin Seal-a-Smile and provide care in 60 counties. Local programs are made up of dentists, dental hygienists, schools, hospitals, local health departments, community health centers, nonprofit agencies, and free clinics.

Connecting you to a **Better Life!**

Parents and Guardians, look for your permission forms in your student's paperwork, please sign and return for participation in the program regardless of your insurance status, you can participate free.

As one Florence School District parent stated, "I thought my student had all their sealants but a few were not in place so I was glad he was assessed and new ones could be put on all free". Florence County Health Department can be reached at 715-528-3427, located in the Courthouse at 501 Lake Avenue or visit our website at <https://florencewipublichealth.com/> .

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