Challenges remain for improving the oral health of Wisconsin’s Head Start children. Untreated decay rates have held steady for the last 11 years, while caries experience has climbed—reversing improvements seen between our first and second Healthy Smiles Head Start surveys. We know tooth decay in children is preventable. Working together, dental and medical providers can implement community-based disease prevention and health promotion approaches that will improve the oral health of all Wisconsin children.

**TOOTH DECAY**

#1

Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood.

Tooth decay is preventable.

**IMPACT OF TOOTH DECAY**

Tooth decay can impact a child’s life in the following ways:

- learning
- self-esteem
- speaking
- sleeping
- eating

**DECAY BY THE NUMBERS**

1 in 5

One in five Head Start children, ages 3 to 5, have early childhood tooth decay.

1 in 4

One in four Head Start children have untreated tooth decay and need treatment.

1 in 2

By age five, one in two Head Start children have had tooth decay.

**DEMOGRAPHIC DISPARITIES**

Asian children in Head Start are nearly three times as likely as White children to have early childhood tooth decay.
For more information about the Wisconsin Healthy Smiles Survey visit:

www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p01702.pdf

IMPROVEMENT NEEDED
Over the past 11 years Wisconsin has failed to improve the oral health of Head Start children.

STARTING DENTAL CARE EARLY
Research suggests that establishing ongoing access to dental care beginning before the first birthday is critical and can result in cost savings for dental care.


EARLY TOOTH LOSS
Early tooth loss caused by tooth decay can result in delays in growth and development.

INCOME DISPARITIES
Children enrolled in Head Start, like other children from low income families, experience more tooth decay than children from families with higher incomes.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
Elementary school children from families with low incomes are three times more likely to miss school because of oral health problems.