

## Reducing the Burden of Childhood Dental Disease in Michigan

Altarum Institute, in collaboration with Delta Dental of Michigan, the University of Michigan School of Dentistry, and the Michigan Department of Community Health, is working to reduce the burden of childhood dental disease in Michigan. Working together with our partner organizations, we seek to improve the oral health of more than 1 million children across the state.

### Early Childhood Caries Is a Public Health Epidemic

Dental disease in children has broad impacts. It can affect learning, speech development, nutritional intake, self-esteem, social development, and quality of life. Failure to identify and prevent dental disease in our youngest children has detrimental and costly long-term effects. It is surprisingly common for dental decay to become severe enough to require ambulatory surgery, emergency room treatment, and even hospitalization.

Childhood dental disease is 100% preventable. Despite being relatively inexpensive to prevent, dental disease is the most prevalent chronic condition among children in the United States and the **most common unmet health care need of poor children across the country.**

There is profound disparity in the impacts of childhood dental disease:

- ▲ As much as **80%** of tooth decay is experienced by only **20–25%** of the population, with children from the lowest socioeconomic groups experiencing issues at significantly higher rates *and* at younger ages.
- ▲ Among children 2–5 years of age who are living at or below the federal poverty level, almost **80%** of their decayed primary teeth have not been restored.
- ▲ In many areas of Michigan, as few as **20%** of children saw a dentist in the past year.
- ▲ In 2011, there were 22 states, including Michigan, where more than half the children covered under Medicaid received no dental care during the year.

To bring about a **sustained, systemwide improvement in children's oral health**, Altarum's collaborative program aims to increase the number of children receiving preventative care and advance appropriate care practices in both the medical and dental community. This systemic change is rooted in our innovative care model that coordinates existing resources, educates parents and providers, provides information technology supports, and **promotes preventive care to the children who need it most.**



# Transforming the System of Children's Oral Health

We aim to engage providers and families in the transformation of children's oral health care through strategic and adaptive approaches.

## Target Preventive Services to High-Risk Children

Dental disease disproportionately affects rural, disadvantaged, and racial/ethnic-minority populations, many of whom lack access and resources for appropriate preventive care. Health and cost-saving benefits of early intervention can be realized if these high-risk children are identified early and appropriately screened, counseled, and connected to high-quality dental services. Strategic recruitment into the program will target these populations through primary care and alternative care settings (places like women, infants, and children clinics; Head Start classrooms; and retail medical clinics).

## Improve the Processes and Tools for Providers

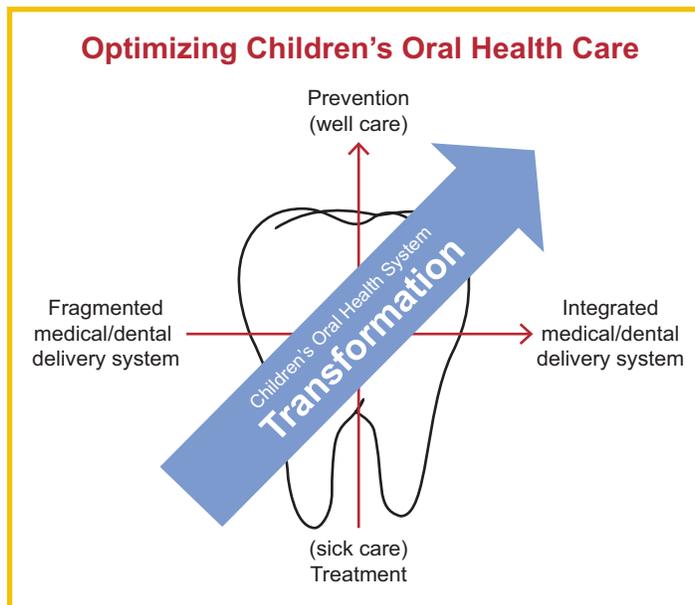
To improve the flow of patients and information between medical and dental providers, this program will increase awareness among primary care providers and supply them with the tools necessary to better identify dental issues and comply with care guidelines. As Altarum builds the information architecture statewide to support better care, we will include an efficient referral pathway, technical assistance, and training for both medical and dental providers.

## Implement a Statewide Dental Quality Monitoring Program

In order to monitor the efficacy of the intervention at a population level, a statewide monitoring system will be implemented by utilizing the American Dental Association/Dental Quality Alliance measure set. This program will improve the ability to monitor our impact on health, health care, dental utilization, preventable utilization, and cost trends.

## Health Information Technology Integration

Lastly, closing the loop via health information technology integration, our program will put in place the technology infrastructure needed for value-based care and quality improvement in dentistry that can be expanded to other states, leading the way for medical and dental providers to engage in sustained, systemwide improvement in health care delivery.



## Become a Partner

Altarum is seeking partners to collaborate programmatically and financially to fully realize success on this comprehensive project. Join our team to create long-term, sustainable change and maximize our collective impact on the lives of children and families.

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