



**MEDIA ADVISORY
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**DENTAL SEALANTS PROVIDED AT SCHOOL TO PREVENT TOOTH
DECAY**

*Charles County Department of Health Offers Free Dental Sealants to
Walter Mitchell Elementary School Students*

BALTIMORE—February is National Children’s Dental Health Month, and on Wednesday, February 3, students at Walter Mitchell Elementary School in LaPlata will receive dental sealants at their school as part of an ongoing program funded by the Maryland Office of Oral Health. Dental sealants are thin plastic coatings painted on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth to prevent tooth decay. According to the U.S. Surgeon General’s report on oral health, dental sealants can reduce decay in school children by 70 percent. Oral health professionals from the Charles County Department of Health will travel to Walter Mitchell Elementary School to apply the sealants and examine the overall oral health of the children.

Charles County is one of 13 health departments in the state that receives grant funding from the Office of Oral Health to implement an innovative program that provides dental sealants to school children during the school day. In FY 2015, 785 students were screened and 672 dental sealants were applied to 187 children through the Charles County Dental Sealant Program, a convenient means for parents and caregivers to have their children receive an oral health service that is proven to prevent tooth decay.

Funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has allowed the Office of Oral Health to develop, coordinate and implement school-based dental sealant programs for Maryland school children in kindergarten through sixth grade in 13 counties statewide. The oral health of Maryland school children has improved significantly in the last decade, and part of this improvement can be attributed to these school-based dental sealant programs.

In FY 2015, Maryland’s dental sealant programs screened 9,037 students and applied 12,162 sealants to 4,150 students. School-based dental sealant programs are a proactive way to prevent cavities in children, screen students for oral disease, assess the overall conditions of their mouths, determine their future risk for tooth decay and refer them to a dental home.

For more information about the Maryland Office of Oral Health and Maryland school-based dental sealant programs, visit <http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/oralhealth/SitePages/dental-sealants.aspx>.

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