



STATE OF MARYLAND

# DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **Maryland Provides 100,000 Fluoride Varnish Applications to Children Across the State** *State reaches significant milestone during 2014 National Children's Dental Health Month*

Baltimore, MD (February 27, 2014) -- Maryland officials announced today that it reached a significant milestone – 100,000 fluoride varnish applications have been applied by medical providers through *Maryland's Mouths Matter* fluoride varnish program, an initiative launched in 2009 designed to prevent tooth decay in high-risk children throughout the state.

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) Office of Oral Health (OOH) and the Maryland Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid) co-administer *Maryland's Mouths Matter*, whereby trained medical practitioners are reimbursed by Medicaid to apply fluoride varnish to children ages 9 months-3 years old enrolled in the Medicaid program during their regularly scheduled medical well-child visits.

"We've made the better choice to set goals to measure our progress and make our state a healthier place to raise a child. As part of the *Maryland's Mouths Matter* program, providers have applied over 100,000 fluoride varnish applications," said Governor O'Malley. "Working together as One Maryland, we will continue to build on our progress and ensure that every child in Maryland receives vital dental care."

Oral disease is the most common disease among children in the United States. Nationally, it affects three out of every five children and is more common than asthma. Low-income children suffer five times the number of cavities than children from middle- and upper-income families.

"Every child deserves access to high quality oral care," said Lt. Governor Brown. "While we've expanded dental services to an additional 131,000 children in Medicaid since 2007, there are still far too many who don't have access to basic treatments like fluoride. Through programs like *Maryland's Mouths Matter*, we'll continue to provide more Marylanders with the care they need to lead a healthy life."

"The *Maryland's Mouths Matter* fluoride varnish program has been extremely effective in getting the medical community involved in the oral health care of Maryland's children," said Harry Goodman, DMD, MPH, Director, Maryland Office of Oral Health. "Family physicians, pediatricians and nurse practitioners are now not only protecting children from cavities, but they are also screening very young children for oral disease at a very appropriate

time and helping facilitate access to dentists for those children found to be in immediate need for dental care.”

Fortunately, cavities are 100 percent preventable. Fluoride varnish is effective in preventing childhood tooth decay in both baby and permanent teeth. It is a protective coating that is painted on teeth that over time releases fluoride, strengthening teeth and preventing decay. Fluoride varnish is applied quickly and easily and dries immediately making it safe to use on babies from the time their first teeth appear. The fluoride varnish application, along with brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and drinking fluoridated water where available, is an important and effective method in reducing and preventing cavities.

"It is essential to prevent cavities, toothaches, and tooth decay in order to meet a child's overall health care needs," said Susan Tucker, Executive Director of Medicaid's Office of Health Services. "In addition, a child is more likely to attend school, and thrive in school, when s/he isn't dealing with severe dental pain. The Maryland's Mouths Matter program not only has improved children's health outcomes, it has improved children's social outcomes as well."

News of the 100,000<sup>th</sup> fluoride varnish application in Maryland as part of the *Maryland's Mouths Matter* program comes on the heels of the State's announcement last week of the results from the *Oral Health Survey of Maryland School Children*, which revealed a 41 percent decrease in untreated tooth decay between 2001 and 2011.

For additional information regarding the *Maryland's Mouths Matter* program, please visit: <http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/oralhealth/SitePages/mouth-matters.aspx>

The Office of Oral Health focuses on improving the oral health of Marylanders, preventing oral diseases and injuries and increasing access to oral health care. For more information on Office of Oral Health programs, please visit [phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/oralhealth/](http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/oralhealth/).

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