



# Helping Bring School-Based Dental Care to Children Across Kentucky

## Case Study

**We have helped thousands of children in Kentucky get the dental care they need through our mobile/portable dental program. Our mission is to guide members and communities to wellness through innovative, multidimensional offerings, delivered with a personal touch.**

### The Problem

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, many parents have had to delay – or forego altogether – one or more types of healthcare for their children. According to a report by the Urban Institute and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in September 2020, 28.8 percent of parents surveyed reported delaying or foregoing at least one type of healthcare for their children.<sup>1</sup>

Dental care was the number-one type of healthcare service that parents delayed or deferred during the pandemic. The Urban Institute report shows that 19.8 percent of parents –almost one in five – reported delaying or foregoing dental care for their children. Families living in low-income households were slightly more likely to delay dental care for their children (21.1 percent).<sup>2</sup>

Dental care access was also a significant issue contributing to delays in routine dental care for children during the pandemic. A survey by the University of Michigan’s Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation found

that about one-third of parents reported that the pandemic made it more difficult to get routine dental care for their children. Some families faced delays in getting an appointment while others were not able to get an appointment at all. Three times as many parents whose children were covered by Medicaid reported being unable to get a routine dental appointment for their children (15 percent versus 4 to 5 percent for families whose children were not on Medicaid).<sup>3</sup>

In a related policy brief, the Urban Institute urges organizations, particularly state- and federally funded children’s health programs and the managed care organizations that help to administer those programs, to take action to reduce the “spillover effects” that the pandemic has had on children’s healthcare. “Children of color, children with special health care needs, children in families with low incomes or members with limited English proficiency, and children in rural areas face higher risks of unmet health care needs.”<sup>4</sup>



## Our Solution

As for specific solutions to address children's unmet healthcare needs, the Urban Institute brief identifies expanding school-based health services as a key strategy that can help to close the gap. "More concerted efforts to incorporate children's health needs into policies for both in-person and virtual education would also be beneficial."<sup>5</sup> To help address this need, Avēsis partnered with Kentucky's Medicaid managed care organizations to administer mobile/portable, school-based dental services to children in Kentucky schools.

School-based health services are an increasingly important way for children to access essential healthcare services. When public schools are the sites not just of education, but of community services and supports, including healthcare in general and dental care in particular, it can help to reduce health inequities and improve outcomes.

## Our Results

In Q1 2022, The majority of the visits included diagnostic care (4,716) and preventive care (3,899). More than 1,000 visits included restoratives care, such as fillings or extractions (1,058).

About three-quarters of the visits (3,890) were elementary-school-aged children (10 years and younger), with the remaining 25 percent of visits spread among children ages 11 to 18+. This means that thousands of children in Kentucky are receiving dental care earlier than they otherwise might have, enabling providers to prevent issues from forming and catch problems before they become severe.

By continuing to administer mobile/portable, school-based dental care services, Avēsis is helping to reduce health inequities and set thousands of children on the path toward a lifetime of good oral health.

At Avēsis, our goal is to improve health equity for the populations that we serve. For kids, keeping up with routine preventive care can help them stay healthy and lead to better developmental outcomes, educational gains, and long-term economic well-being.

**To learn more about our mobile/portable dental services, connect with us.**

# 5,178

Avēsis dental visits were administered in Kentucky schools.

# 1,000+

of those visits included restorative care.

# 75%

Visits (3,890) were elementary-school-aged children (10 years and younger).

# 25%

of the remaining visits were spread among children ages 11 to 18+.

**Our goal is to improve health equity for the populations that we serve.**

1 Dulce Gonzales, Michael Karpman, Genevieve M. Kenney, and Stephen Zuckerman. Delayed and Forgone Health Care for Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Urban Institute. Retrieved from: [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103652/delayed-and-forgone-health-care-for-children-during-the-covid-19-pandemic\\_0.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103652/delayed-and-forgone-health-care-for-children-during-the-covid-19-pandemic_0.pdf). Accessed July 2, 2022.

2 Ibid.

3 Sarah Clark. How COVID-19 Has Disrupted Children's Dental Care. Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation, University of Michigan. Retrieved from: <https://ihpi.umich.edu/news/how-covid-19-has-disrupted-childrens-dental-care>. Accessed July 5, 2022.

4 Stacey McMorrow, Dulce Gonzalez, Clara Alvarez Caraveo, and Genevieve M. Kenney. Urgent Action Needed to Address Children's Unmet Health Care Needs during the Pandemic. The Urban Institute. Retrieved from: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/urgent-action-needed-address-childrens-unmet-health-care-needs-during-pandemic>. Accessed July 2, 2022.

5 Ibid.