



# *Quick Reads*

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## **Dental health improvements**

The [2016 Third Grade Oral Health Survey](#) shows the percentage of children with dental sealants rose from 45.6 percent in 2012 to 59.4 percent in 2016. This is likely due to Iowa's investment in the expansion of school-based dental sealant programs through the I-Smile initiative. This investment is also helping reach children most at-risk for tooth decay. A slightly higher percentage of children from low-income families had a preventive dental sealant (61.4 percent) compared to children from higher-income families (58.7 percent). Iowa is doing better than the nation as a whole. A recently released [CDC Vital Signs](#) report finds that children from low-income families are less likely than children from higher-income families to have dental sealants.

## **Dr. Bob Russell honored**

Bob Russell, DDS, MPH, State Public Health Dental Director, has been named a [2016 Iowa Public Health Heroes](#) award winner. Through this annual award program, the University of Iowa College of Public Health celebrates the exceptional efforts of Iowa's public health practitioners and recognizes individuals from across a range of career paths who have worked to promote a healthier state.

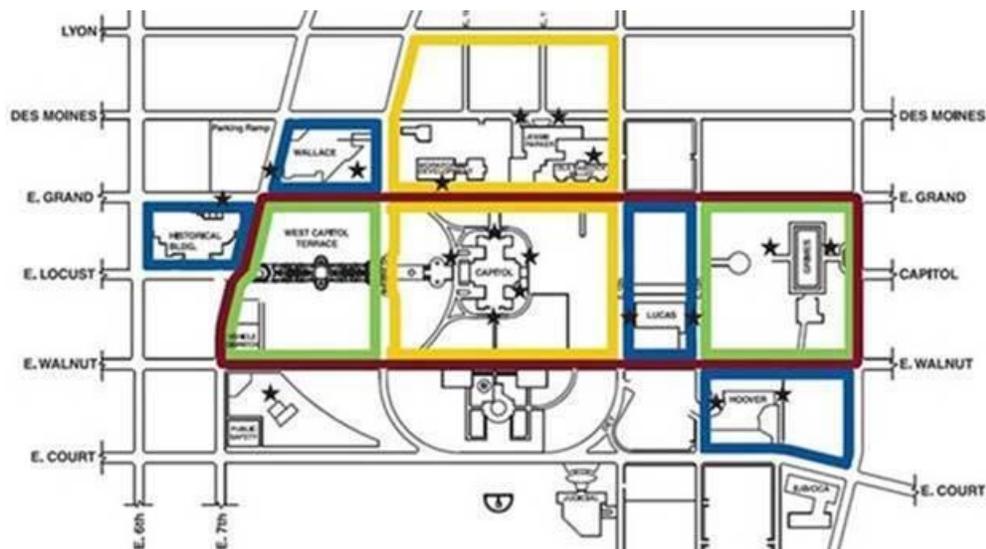
Since 2005, when Dr. Russell began employment with IDPH and assumed the position of Public Health Dental Director for Iowa, he has provided a steady hand in expanding access to oral health services for Iowans from the beginning of their lives through their senior years. To increase access, he initially spearheaded development and implementation of the [I-Smile™ program](#) for children receiving Medicaid. I-Smile™ has been recognized nationally as a model program and best practice for improving access to oral health for children.

As both an oral health and public health professional, Dr. Russell also has taken up the challenge of supporting fluoridation of public water supplies. Although water fluoridation is one of the 10 top public health achievements of the last century, it continues to be under severe scrutiny. Local boards of health and local public health departments frequently utilize Dr. Russell's expertise in addressing fluoride concerns. As a board member of [Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation](#) since its inception in 2008, Dr. Russell has provided critical expertise and linkages to Iowa's dental public health system, and guidance to support the Foundation's mission to improve the oral health of Iowans.

Dr. Russell will be honored at a ceremony November 30, during the 17th Annual [Iowa Public Health Practice Colloquium](#) in Iowa City.

## Walking paths

I was proud to be part of the unveiling of [new walking paths](#) on the Capitol Complex last month. The Iowa Department of Administrative Services and IDPH partnered to support walking for Capitol Complex employees and visitors by mapping convenient routes and placing signs where more than 3,500 State employees work. These nine, newly identified routes vary from .4 to 1.4 miles to provide a range of convenient walking durations from approximately ten to 30 minutes.



These paths represent our state's dedication to changing the lives of Iowans by making healthy choices fun and accessible. If you're visiting the Capitol Complex, I encourage you to take advantage of the new walking paths.

## Monthly data snapshot

Data are essential to the practice of public health. Each month, Quick Reads highlights selected tidbits to help create awareness of IDPH data and epidemiology.

	Presence of Preventive Care	Payment Source for Care			
	With at least one Sealant	Private Insurance	Medicaid	<i>hawk-i</i>	Self-pay
<b>2016</b>	59.4%	51.3%	29.7%	6.9%	9.5%
<b>2012</b>	45.6%	49.3%	24.8%	5.3%	14.9%

The percent of children with dental sealants rose from 45.6 percent in 2012 to 59.4 percent in 2016, likely due to Iowa’s investment in the expansion of school-based dental sealant programs through the I-Smile™ initiative. Using funding from Medicaid, federal grants, and Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation, IDPH has expanded school oral health services from within 27 of Iowa’s 99 counties in 2012 to 78 counties by 2015. This has been particularly beneficial to reach children from low-resource families; the survey found that 61.4 percent had a dental sealant.

More Iowa children now have a payment source for their dental care than in previous years. There are more children with private insurance since 2012 (51.3 percent compared to 49.3 percent), and more are enrolled in Medicaid (29.7 percent compared to 24.8 percent) and hawk-i (6.9 percent compared to 5.3 percent). Outreach to enroll children and families on Medicaid and hawk-i and providing presumptive eligibility are strategies of the I-Smile™ program.

### **Stay informed, share your story**

To contribute a news item or smart practice, please write to Polly Carver-Kimm at [Polly.Carver-Kimm@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:Polly.Carver-Kimm@idph.iowa.gov).

*To everyone in public health and all our partners, keep up the great work!*

— Gerd