

HEAD START AND ORAL HEALTH

Dental decay is the most common chronic illness among children and can cause difficulty learning, speaking and eating. In Iowa, the I-Smile™ program uses strategies to prevent decay for young children. I-Smile™ connects children and families with dental, medical and community resources to ensure a lifetime of health and wellness. I-Smile™ program staff provide preventive dental services at Head Start classrooms across Iowa, in order to prevent dental decay and establish good oral hygiene habits for young children. An oral health survey was completed during the spring of 2021 using I-Smile™ program data from screenings of Head Start-enrolled children. View the [full report](#) on the Bureau of Oral and Health Delivery Systems website.




17%
of participants had a filled tooth

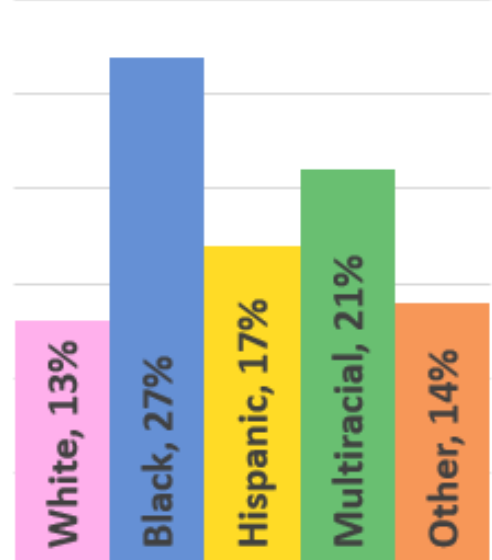
16%
of participants had decay



30%
of participants had a history of decay



2X
Black participants had decay (27%) at two times the rate of White participants (13%)




21%
needed a referral within 3 months or sooner for decay, abscess or pain

Decay Rates by Race