

North Dakota School Personnel's Experience with SEAL!ND 2019-2020 School Year

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH)^a Oral Health Program (OHP)^b has established a school-based dental sealant program (SEAL!ND)^c which has been providing dental sealants, fluoride varnish application, oral health education, and dental screenings and referrals for students throughout North Dakota dating back to 2012. The NDDoH OHP continues to administer SEAL!ND utilizing dollars from both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) State Actions to Improve Oral Health Outcomes^d grant and the Health Resources and Services Administration's Grants to States to Support Oral Health Workforce Activities.^e

SEAL!ND prioritizes providing preventive oral health care to low-income and underserved students by targeting schools with 45% or greater of their students enrolled in the free and reduced-fee school lunch program. Although schools with a larger proportion of youth who are low-income are prioritized, additional schools participate in SEAL!ND. The NDDoH OHP Prevention Coordinator provides educational materials to school administrators, staff, and parents on the benefits of dental sealants, inviting participation in the program. Some children were unable to sit for the dental screen, or they were absent for the first screen but were then able to receive fluoride varnish. Because of this, more children received varnish than those who received a full screen.



Dental sealants^f are thin coatings that, when painted on, protect chewing surfaces of back teeth (molars) from food and germs, and prevent cavities. Once applied, sealants protect against 80% of cavities for two years and continue to protect against 50% of cavities for up to four years.



80

participating
schools

3,578

students had a
dental screen

3,617

students received
fluoride varnish

6,225

teeth were protected
with dental sealants

SEAL!ND Experience Among School Personnel

Of the 84 schools invited to participate in an electronic survey assessing their experience with SEAL!ND, 57 schools completed a survey, in full. More specifically, 19 individuals from 31 non-qualifying (NQ) schools participated and 38 individuals from 53 qualifying (Q) schools.

Qualified (Q) Schools: Schools meeting the criteria of high-risk, reporting at least 45% of their students enrolled in the free and reduced-fee school lunch program.

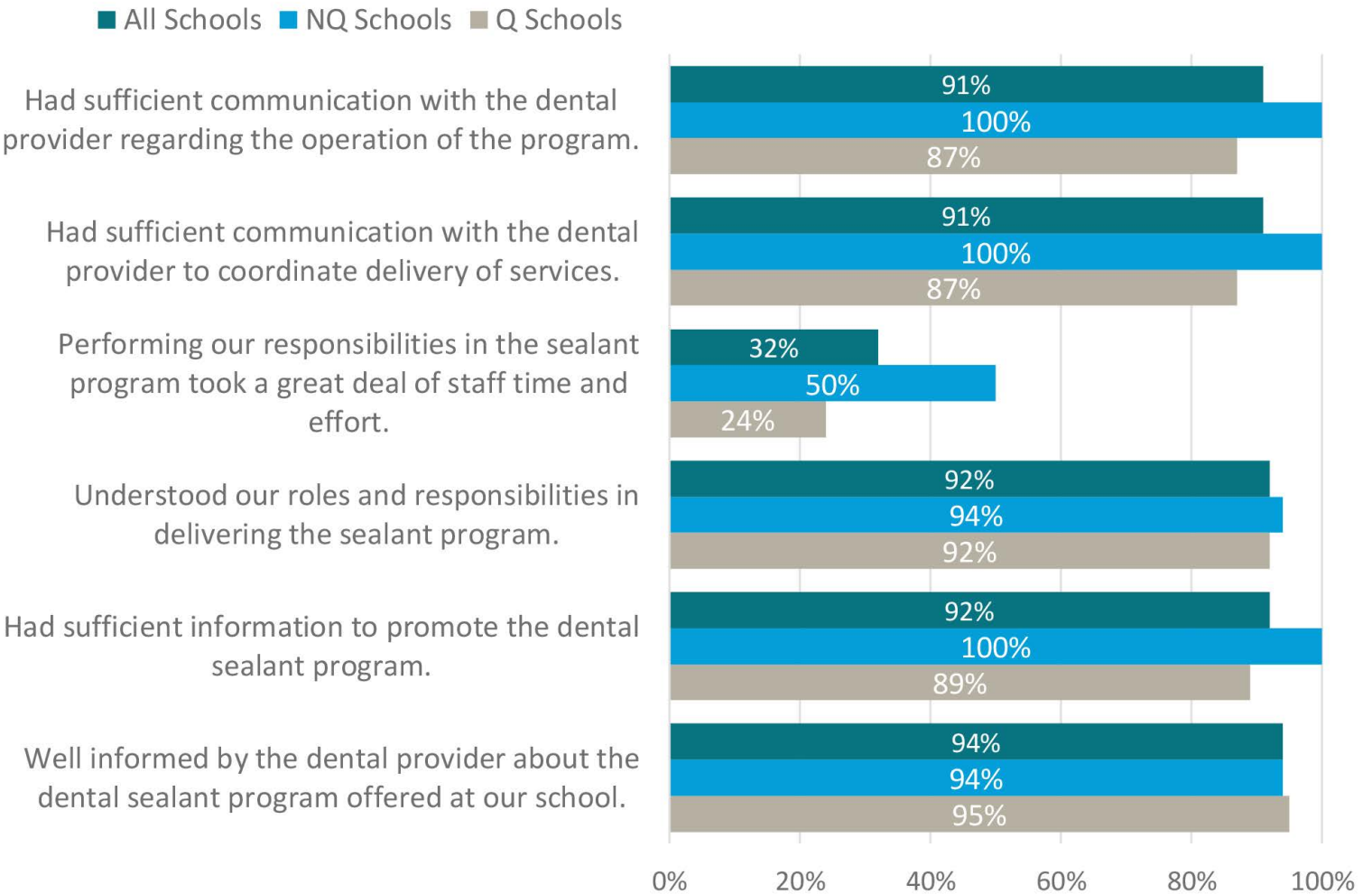
Non-Qualified (NQ) Schools: Any other school receiving services that had fewer than 45% of their students enrolled in the free and reduced-fee school lunch program.

A majority of the surveys (59%) were completed by administration (59%) or non-certified staff (36%). Experiences primarily reflect those of administration and administrative assistants, and not certified educators. Although administration and non-certified administrative staff were likely responsible for a majority of the work associated with organizing SEAL!ND activities, certified staff (educators) may have a different perspective regarding questions related to the programs' potential disruption to the school day and parental response. There is potential to assess the perception of educators in the future.

Experience with the SEAL!ND Program

Nearly half (46%) of students served were White; however, 27% were Indigenous (identified as American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) in the data). This is notable given that only 5.6% of the total state population includes individuals who are AI/AN. Although more than 70% of students who were White reported no sign of previous decay, this was true for only 43% of students who were AI/AN.

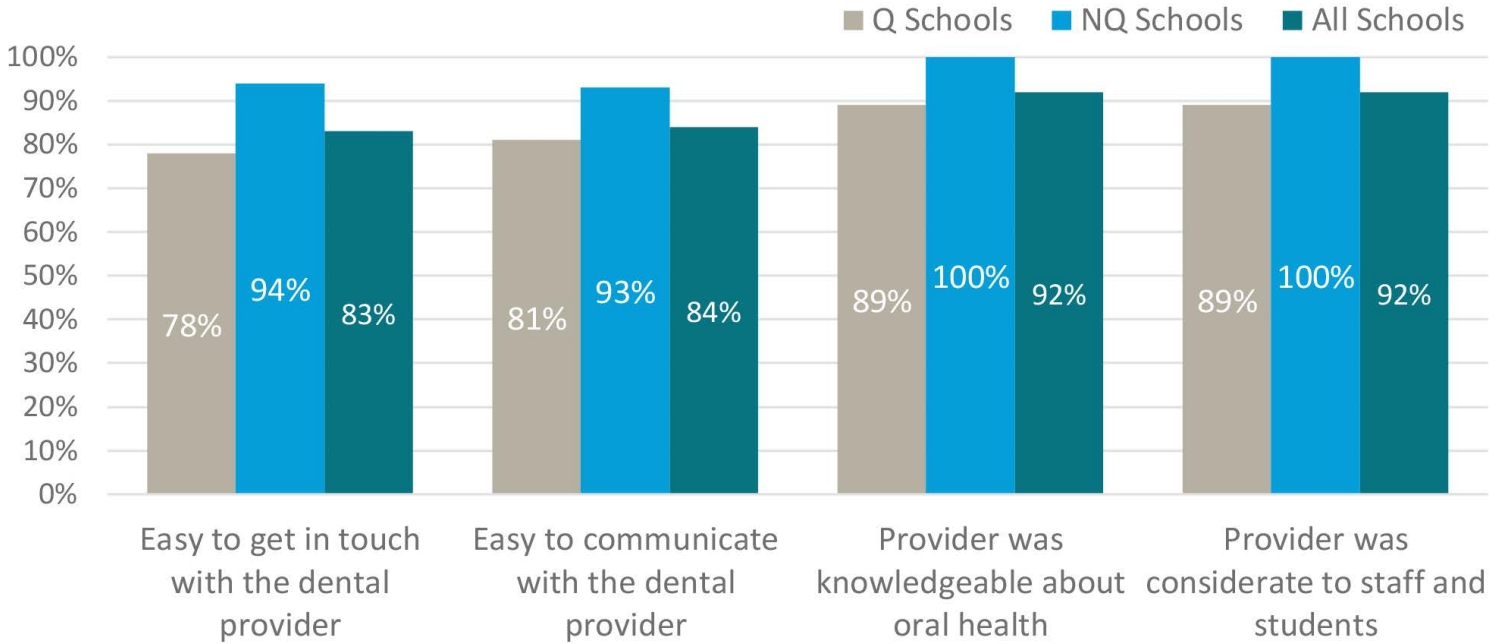
Percentage who Agreed/Strongly Agreed about their Experience with the Program by School Qualification, 2019-20 School Year



Experience with the Dental Provider(s)

In general, a near majority of participants (over 83%) agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to get in touch and communicate with the dental provider(s). Similarly they agreed or strongly agreed that the providers were knowledgeable about oral health, and were considerate to both staff and students. However, although there were no statistically significant differences between means, a larger percentage of NQ schools than Q schools indicated agreement across all four statements.

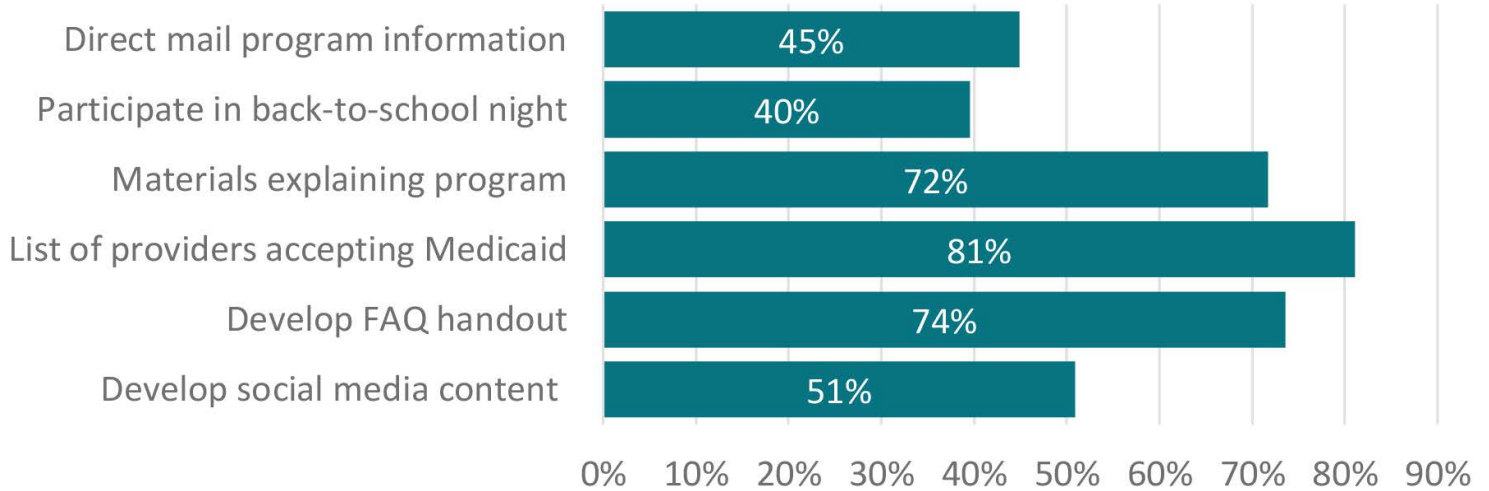
Percentage who Agreed/Strongly Agreed about their Experience with the Dental Provider(s) by School Qualification, 2019-20 School Year



Program Communication and Additional Support Needed

School personnel were asked to indicate which assistance would be helpful from the NDDoH OHP. The greatest proportion of participants (81%) indicated that it would be helpful to have a list of dental providers who will work with low-income families and/or accept Medicaid followed by a need for easy to read materials explaining the program and answer frequent caregiver questions.

Percentage of Schools Indicating the Following Assistance from the Dental Team and Program Leads "Would be Helpful"



The NDDoH OHP works with the schools to provide materials and promotion of SEAL!ND. Overall, the top three modes of communication were: (1) written materials sent home with students (98% of schools use this mode); (2) newsletters (86% of schools); and, (3) school website (82% of schools). However, just because the mode is the most common, it does not mean that it is deemed the most effective. The most effective modes included: (1) Facebook (53%); (2) school smart phone apps (53%); and, (3) text alerts (52%). Overall, there were a few challenges that may warrant the attention of the NDDoH OHP. Roughly one in four schools indicated that the physical space was a challenge, that parents do not see the consent forms, and that parents are afraid they may have to pay for the services. One in five schools indicated that parents not understanding the program poses a challenge. The challenge with the greatest percentage of schools agreeing or strongly agreeing related to parents not returning the consent forms; 43% of Q schools and 38% of NQ schools indicated this was a barrier.

Summary and Recommendations to Improve School Personnel Experiences

In response to the feedback provided by school personnel during the 2019-2020 school year, it is recommended that the NDDoH OHP work to update the SEAL!ND manual to include:

- Language for social media promotion and text reminders.
- FAQ and program information sheets that schools can distribute to caregivers.
- Tips on how to increase caregiver participation and signed consent forms.
- List of dental providers accepting Medicaid/low-income children.

In the 2019-20 school year, SEAL!ND provided 3,578 dental screens in 80 schools, placing 6,225 dental sealants. Overall, schools are very happy with the SEAL!ND program and it is imperative that North Dakota continues to identify willing dental providers and eligible schools to participate in SEAL!ND or other school-based dental sealant programs throughout the state. Survey respondents shared:

“We absolutely need and love this program!!!”

“This program is wonderful.” “Thank you for all that you do.”

“This is a fabulous service to our students and their families, providing opportunities for dental care they may not otherwise receive.”

“So grateful for this program.”

Additional School-Based Dental Sealant Program Information

Full Report | [Evaluation of SEAL!ND: School Year 2019-20^s](#)

Infographic | [North Dakota School-Based Sealant Programs: 2019-2020^h](#)

Brief | [Impact and Reach of SEAL!ND: 2019-2020 School Yearⁱ](#)

Fact Sheet 2018-19 | [Progress and Reach of the SEAL!ND Program: 2018-2019 School Year^j](#)

Citations

a. health.nd.gov/

b. oral.health.nd.gov/

c. oral.health.nd.gov/what-we-do/school-sealant/

d. cdc.gov/oralhealth/funded_programs/cooperative_agreements/index.htm

e. hrsa.gov/grants/find-funding/HRSA-18-014

f. cdc.gov/oralhealth/dental_sealant_program/index.htm

g. ruralhealth.und.edu/assets/4061-17204/evaluation-of-seal-nd-2019-2020.pdf

h. ruralhealth.und.edu/assets/3994-16884/nd-school-based-sealant-programs-2019-2020.pdf

i. ruralhealth.und.edu/assets/3995-16887/impact-reach-of-seal-nd-2019-2020.pdf

j. ruralhealth.und.edu/assets/3509-14141/progress-of-seal-nd-program.pdf

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For More Information

- Visit the North Dakota Oral Health Program webpage at oral.health.nd.gov.
- Visit the Center for Rural Health webpage at ruralhealth.und.edu/what-we-do/oral-health.