



SUPPORTS

A. 7402-A/S.9308 (Peoples-Stokes/Fernandez)

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to permitting certain persons to perform the application of topical fluoride varnish.

Applying fluoride varnish to the teeth of young children is proven to reduce dental disease, but too few children in New York are receiving treatments. Allowing additional types of health providers to perform this service would bring New York in line with other states and create more access points where children can receive this preventive service. Increasing access to fluoride varnish was a recommendation from the 2022 NYS Early Childhood Oral Health Summit.

Dental disease in children has been called a “hidden epidemic.” Hidden because dental disease is not always apparent until the pain becomes unendurable or until it manifests in an inability to eat, sleep or concentrate in school. More than 14% of children in New York reported one or more oral health problems in 2020-2021. In 2020, only one in every three New York children on Medicaid (32.8%) received a preventive dental visit (national median 41.5%) which includes fluoride varnish. There remain persistent disparities in oral health with minority children and children living in poverty especially affected by poor dental health.

Fluoride varnish is a topical solution applied in less than two minutes without special equipment and with minimal training. Studies show that children who receive fluoride varnish every three months have fewer cavities than those who get it less often or not at all. Fluoride varnish is a standard of practice for dental and pediatric offices and is covered by Medicaid and commercial health insurance.

The legislation will allow additional providers to apply fluoride varnish under their scope of practice giving dental and physician offices more flexibility in how they use staff and create opportunities for children to receive this important preventive service. The legislation will also allow parents to apply fluoride varnish to their children under the supervision of a licensed provider during a telehealth visit. Since the product is more effective when it is used frequently, the strategy of allowing parents to apply fluoride varnish on a supervised telehealth visit removes some of the main barriers to receiving the service: lack of time and lack of transportation.

As the membership organization representing New York’s 58 Local Health Departments (LHDs), NYSACHO is in strong support of this legislation. Preventative public health initiatives are vital to improving the overall health of all people in New York State, especially those who are low income, from minority communities, or live in areas with few healthcare providers. For these individuals, this act

would not only make care more available, but would eliminate several other barriers to care such as cost of appointments or travel to dentist's offices. Improving the health outcomes of children, especially those who are from minority communities or live in low-income families or in areas with provider shortages, is of great importance to New York's LHDs, and is therefore included in the Prevention Agenda, which serves as the workplan for all 58 LHDs.

For all the above reasons, NYSACHO is in strong support of this common-sense public health legislation and urge New York's lawmakers to adopt this act during this 2024 legislative session.

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