

# **2023-2024 Oregon Student Dental Screening Report**

**Annual Legislative Report**

**December 2024**

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## Introduction

Schools play an increasingly important role in how children receive health information and services. Students with a lower oral health status are more likely to experience dental pain, miss school, and perform poorly in school.<sup>1</sup> Since 2017, school districts have been required to report to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), the number of students who submit a certificate that demonstrates completion of a dental screening. This annual report, required by ORS 336.201, summarizes the data received by ODE from school districts. Notably, the State Board of Education paused data collection for the 2022-23 school year per legislative directive.

## Background and methodology

To better understand and promote the oral health of students in Oregon, ORS 336.213 (2017) requires school districts to collect and provide preventative dental care information. According to ORS 336.213, *“Each education provider shall require a student who is seven years of age or younger and who is beginning an educational program with the education provider for the first time to submit certification that the student received a dental screening within the previous 12 months”*.

School districts are required to collect dental screening information on students who are seven years of age or younger and new to the district. Students must provide a certificate that demonstrates the completion of a dental screening within the last twelve months.

The data included below indicates the number of students who have submitted dental screening certificates and those who have not. These dental certificates ask for information as to whether a student has been screened, whether they have turned in a certificate of screening at another school, or whether they are opted out of dental screenings. The dental certificate also provides a space where parents/guardians completing the form may indicate a reason for opting-out their student. Allowable opt-out reasons include a screening was already submitted at a previous school, financial barriers, or religious reasons. Each year, school districts report the number of students who submit a certificate, do not submit a certificate, and the number of students that were opted out for each allowable reason. School districts are not required to provide dental screening services to students, only to collect these certificates. When school districts do conduct dental screenings, they often partner with community dental programs to provide these services.

ODE communicates these requirements to districts through various channels including listserv messaging, website resources and guidance, and through the district data reporting process. For the 2023-24 school year, data collection was conducted from May to June 2024. For this report, 196 of 197 school districts submitted data. The data reported reflects dental screening information from the 2023-24 school year.

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson, S. L., Vann, W. F., Jr., Kotch, J. B., Pahel, B. T., & Lee, J. Y. (2011). Impact of poor oral health on children's school attendance and performance. *American Journal of Public Health, 101*(10), 1900–1906.

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## Results

Table 1 provides information about the percentage of districts that submitted dental screening information. The 196 districts who reported data enrolled 544,819 of all 544,955, or 99.99% of students in Oregon.

<b>Table 1: District Submission</b>	
<b>Number of Reporting Districts/Number of Districts in Oregon</b>	<b>Number of Students Enrolled in Reporting Districts/Number of Students Enrolled in Oregon</b>
196/197= 99%	544,819/544,955= 99.99%

Table 2 provides dental screening data collected during the 2023-2024 school year. The count of students required for whom the district is required to submit a dental screening certificate includes only students who are seven or younger and who are new to a district (such as transferring into the district or first enrolling in school). 61% of required students submitted dental screening certificates. This is an increase from 57% in 2024-23 school year.

<b>Table 2: Dental Screenings</b>	
<b>Count of Students Required to Submit Dental Screening Certificate *</b>	<b>Number of Dental Screening Certificates Collected</b>
47,195	28,861

\*Age seven and under who are new to a district.

Students who opt out of dental screening are required to provide a reason. Reasons include: the student submitted a screening certificate at a prior school, the screening poses a religious conflict to the student or family, or the student or family faces a resource burden in obtaining a screening. Table 3 provides the reasons reported for the 6,093 students who opted out. Results demonstrate that resource-related barriers were the most common.

<b>Table 3: Students Opting Out of Dental Screening</b>			
<b>Reasons for Opting Out of Dental Screening</b>	Screening Completed the Previous Year	976	
	Religious reasons	234	
	Burden (financial or other)	1,490	
	No reason provided/reported	3,393	
<b>Total Number of Students Who Opted Out of Dental Screening</b>			6,093

School districts frequently provide dental screening services to better support their students, improve their health, and reduce barriers in their education, although this is not required. Of the 196 districts that submitted dental screening data, 178 districts (90%) reported that they provide dental screenings directly to their students. This is a 5% increase from the 2021-2022 school year.

## Conclusion

To better understand and promote the oral health of students in Oregon, ORS 336.213 requires school districts to collect data on student dental screening certificates. Data from school districts shows that a significant number of students in Oregon receive dental screening services at school. During the 2023-2024 school year, 90% of Oregon school districts reported offering these services. However, many students continue to encounter resource-related challenges in accessing dental screenings.