

## Appendix A - School and Community Outreach Dental Screening Data

### Background

During a typical school year, the Public Health Dental Program provides free dental screenings in all publicly-funded elementary schools in Waterloo Region to children in various grades. The Dental Program promotes oral health, identifies unmet oral needs, and connects children of low-income families with appropriate government-funded dental programs. Public Health Dental Hygienists follow up with children identified with urgent needs to ensure dental treatment is completed. This is often facilitated through enrollment in the Healthy Smiles Ontario Emergency and Essential Services Stream (HSO-EESS), particularly for those experiencing financial hardship. The current [Oral Health Protocol](#) under the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) mandates boards of health screen at minimum the following grades depending on risk level determined<sup>1</sup>:

- i) JK, SK, and Grade 2 in low screening intensity schools; and
- ii) JK, SK, Grade 2 and 7 in medium screening intensity schools; and
- iii) JK, SK, Grade 2, 4, and 7 in high screening intensity schools.

Dental screenings are also provided by the Dental Program at community outreach sites offering dental support to individuals and families at locations where other wrap-around services are available. These include YMCA EarlyON, YMCA Settlement Services, Reception House, Camino, Anselma and Haven House. These outreach events are scheduled based on demand and Public Health resources.

### Results and Findings

Findings show that in the 2023-2024 school year, the overall percentage of children in need of urgent care was comparable to the previous school year.

- 19,537 students were screened, and 1,682 children (8.6%) were identified with urgent dental care needs.
- Subsequently, 597 children (30.5%) of those identified with urgent needs were enrolled in the HSO-EESS program to access dental care in the community. This is a slight increase from the 28% of HSO-EESS enrolled children from the previous school year.
- 850 children (4.4%) were identified as having non-urgent dental needs. Caregivers are provided with information to contact the Public Health Dental Program if they require support in accessing dental care.

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<sup>1</sup> The Oral Health Protocol defines risk level calculation based on Grade 2 decay screening results from the previous school year; where number of teeth with active decay is recorded in both primary and secondary dentition and an overall percentage is calculated for each school. Schools with grade 2 decay rates of  $\geq 14\%$  are deemed high risk,  $\geq 9.5\%$  but  $< 14\%$  are moderate risk, and  $< 9.5\%$  are deemed low risk.

The following table outlines the number of children screened at community sites over the past three years:

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Number (#) of children screened</b>	<b>Number (#) and percentage (%) of children identified with urgent dental needs</b>
July-December 2022	141	81 (57.5%)
January-December 2023	249	118 (47.4%)
January-June 2024	59	41 (69.5%)

Those identified with urgent dental needs were enrolled in the HSO-EESS program to access dental care in the community.