



A. 7402 (Peoples-Stokes)

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to permitting dental assistants and licensed practical nurses to perform the application of topical fluoride varnish

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) supports the above-referenced legislation which would improve access to primary oral care through the expansion of health care professionals available to apply fluoride varnish. Fluoride varnish application reduces the incidence of dental disease, but currently there is limited access to this treatment for children in New York State. Expanding the types of health providers who can apply fluoride varnish would bring New York in line with other states who have found this an effective, evidence-based intervention that improves oral health for children and offers more access points where children can receive this preventive service. This is particularly important in rural areas of New York State, where access to dental care is limited.

Dental disease in children frequently remains untreated until the pain becomes unbearable or until a child is unable 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. Ongoing barriers to oral health access for both minority children and children living in poverty perpetuate these disparities and exacerbate poor dental health.

Fluoride varnish, a topical solution, can be applied in less than two minutes and requires minimal training and no special equipment. 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.

Expanding the available providers who can be trained to apply fluoride varnish will offer both dental and physician offices increased flexibility in the staff available to provide this critical preventive oral health services to children. Healthy teeth are important to the overall health and wellbeing of children.

NYSACHO supports this legislation and recommends that it be enacted into law to improve access to oral health care for children.

NYSACHO Contact: Sarah Ravenhall, Executive Director, sravenhall@nysacho.org.