

2018 Rhode Island Skilled Nursing Facilities Oral Health Report



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About the Oral Health Survey

Oral health is a vital component of overall health, and the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) is committed to understanding the oral health services available to and used by Rhode Islanders living or receiving short-term care in nursing homes.

RIDOH worked with the Rhode Island Long Term Care Coordinating Council's Oral Health Subcommittee to develop a survey focused on dental and oral care in long-term care facilities. The *2018 Oral Health Survey* was sent to administration-level staff at all Medicare-Certified Rhode Island nursing homes in February 2018 with the aim of gathering information about current oral health practices and opportunities to support nursing homes in their delivery of quality oral healthcare.

Participant Characteristics

Forty-six nursing homes contributed data to the *2018 Oral Health Survey* (response rate: 54.8%). **Figures 1 and 2** show descriptive characteristics of the facilities that responded (N=42).

Figure 1. Resident Census (as of February 2018)

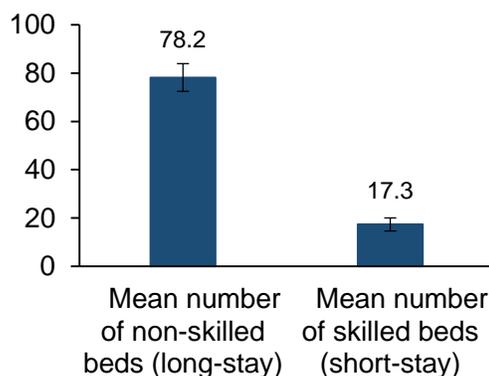
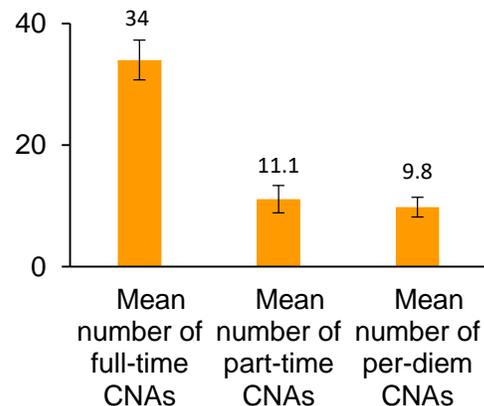


Figure 2. Staffing Levels (as of February 2018)



Almost **all** facilities (>40) reported regular access to mouthwash, tooth brushes, denture tabs, and denture cases. However, **only 23 facilities reported regular access** to dental floss.

15 facilities reported access to **Chlorhexidine**, an oral antiseptic. Chlorhexidine is available by prescription and is used to reduce plaque and gingivitis when ideal brushing and flossing is not achievable (e.g., in cases of care-resistant behavior).

Two facilities had **ultrasonic dentures cleaners**. These may be more effective in disinfecting dentures than tablet cleaners alone.

13 facilities reported access to **sodium fluoride 1.1% gel**. The gel is available by prescription and is recommended for older adults who are at higher risk of tooth decay from dry mouth due to side effects of some medications.

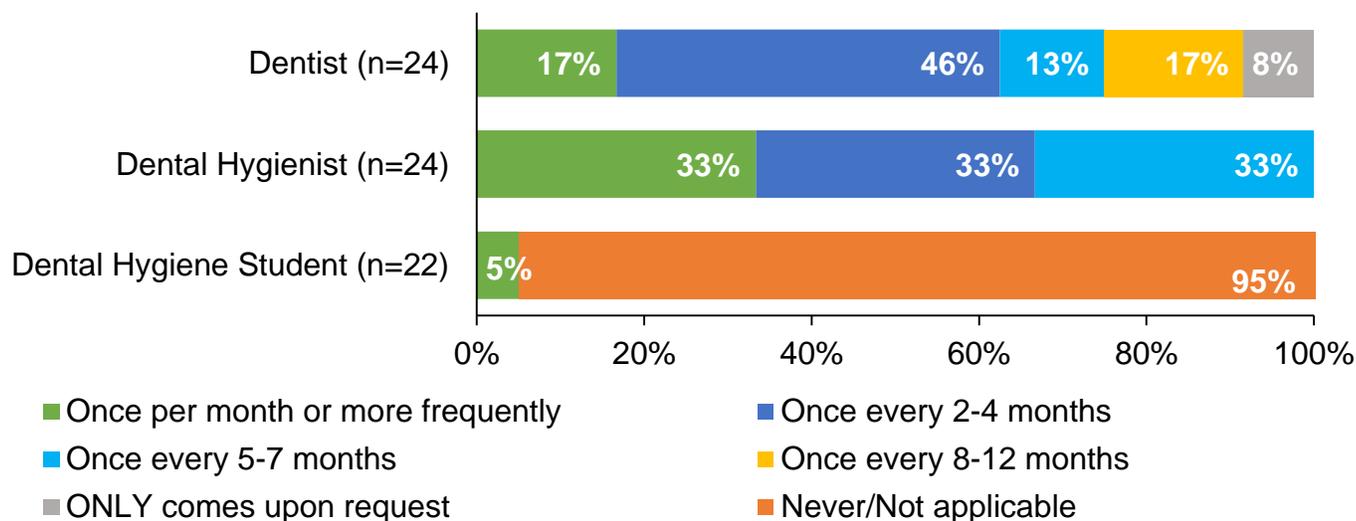
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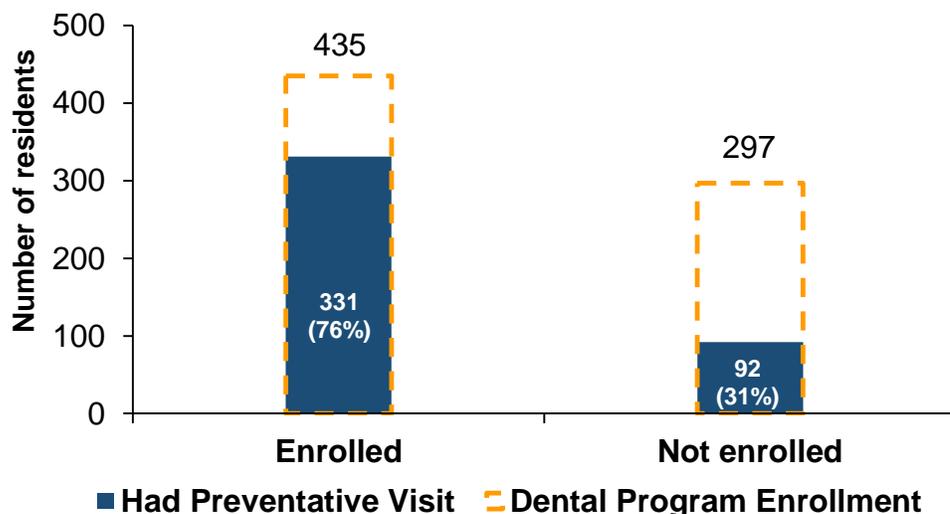
The 2018 Oral Health Survey asked participants how frequently dental care providers visit the nursing home to care for residents. **Figure 3** displays how often dentists, dental hygienists, and student dental hygienists visited Rhode Island nursing homes.

Figure 3. Frequency of Dental Care Provider Visits to Nursing Homes



Nursing Home Dental Programs and Preventive Visits

Figure 4. Number of Nursing Home Residents Who Received a Preventive Dental Care Visit, By Enrollment Status in The Facility's Dental Plan¹



76% of nursing home residents enrolled in a facility's dental program had a preventive visit in the last year compared to **31% of residents not enrolled**.

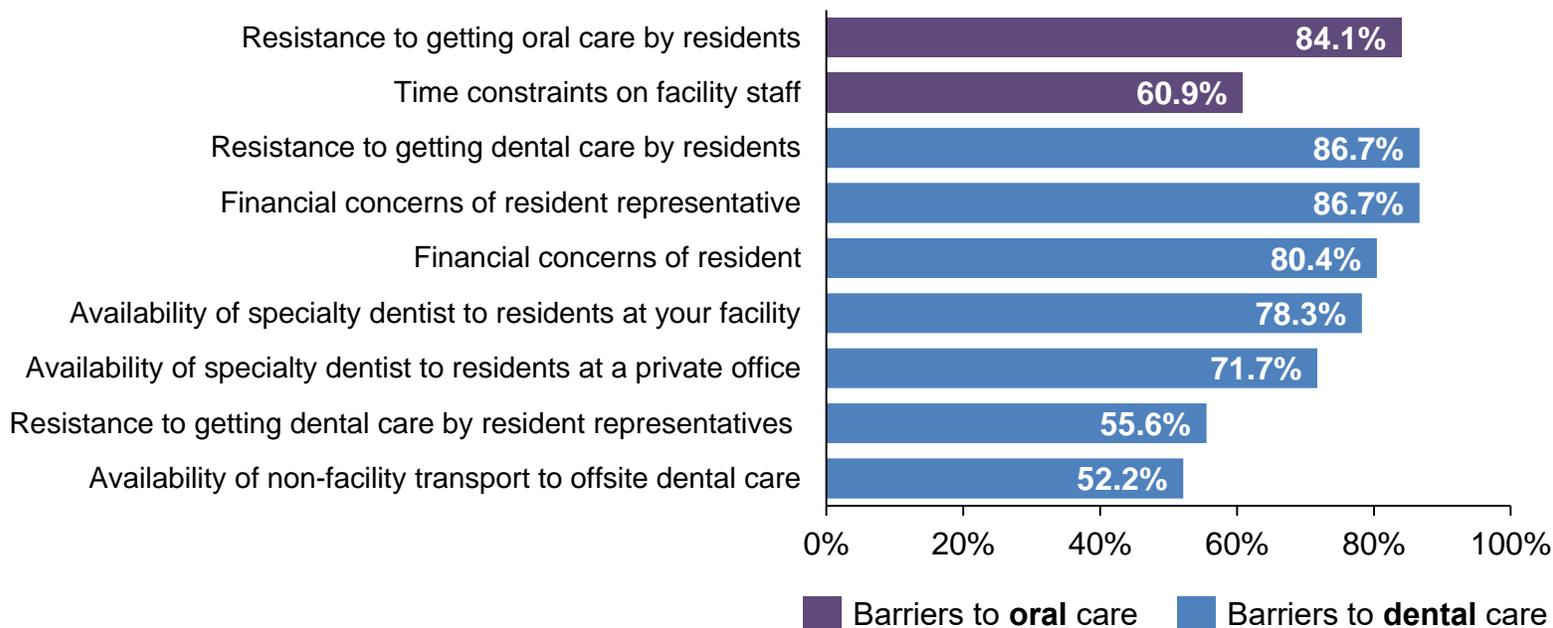
Older adults with **compromised oral hygiene** from dexterity or cognitive changes and those with dry mouth symptoms **benefit from more frequent dental evaluation and preventive services**.

¹Survey respondents who provided valid data for whether their facility had a dental program and whether residents had a preventive visit during calendar year 2017.

*Oral care was defined as routine mouth care, such as brushing of teeth, typically completed with the assistance of nursing home staff. Dental care was defined as care completed by a dental professional (dental hygienist or dentist).

Barriers to Resident Oral Health for Nursing Homes

Figure 5. The Percent of Facilities That Reported the Following Barriers to Providing or Facilitating Dental Care or Oral Care Were “Significant” or “Very Significant” (N=46)



More than 80% of participants reported that the financial concerns of residents, resistance to getting dental care by residents, and resistance to getting oral care by residents were **significant or very significant barriers** for delivering and/or facilitating dental care or oral care for nursing home residents.

Want to learn more about oral health in Rhode Island?

Rhode Island Department of Health Oral Health Program

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