

# *Looking at NJ Medicaid Oral Health Quality Performance for Children*

*Through a Secret Shopper Market Survey of the MCO Network Directories for Children Ages 0 to 6*

**January 2025**





The mouth is the gateway to the rest of the body.

Good oral health is **vitaly important** to the **health and wellbeing** of everyone.



*National Institutes of Health: Oral Health in America: Advances and Challenges. Bethesda, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, 2021.*

## Importance of Oral Health

Visit the dentist by your baby's first birthday to spot signs of problems early.

- CDC

When your baby's first tooth comes in (or no later than their first birthday), take them to the dentist.

- HRSA

A dental visit for children by 1 year of age.

- The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, the American Dental Association, American Dental Hygienists' Association, and the American Association of Public Health Dentistry all recommend.

The age 1 dental visit is a foundation for building a lifetime of good oral health.

- US Department of Health and Human Services and Administration for Children and Families



## Quality Measures

The AAPD recommends linking children to a Dental Home by age 1 or the eruption of the first tooth.

We do that at KinderSmile Foundation.

However, as a state we are failing our families!

The quality measures released show that

- By age 1 less than 1% of children see a dentist
- At age 2-3 only 22% have preventive care
- At age 3-5 only 50% do

**The average for all ages was 44%**

## Oral Health Data

In **2023** the New Jersey DOH collected oral health data for the first time:

- **36%** of all NJ 3rd graders had untreated dental disease, compared to the national average of 20%.
- **24%** of NJ's Head Start children have untreated decay, compared to 12% nationwide.
- On any given day **15%** of NJ's 3rd graders need **URGENT** dental care.



## NJ FamilyCare Results- Measure Year 2022

### Oral Evaluation, Dental Services (OEV-CH) by Percentage of Enrollees

| Age Group      | Aetna | Wellpoint | Horizon | UnitedHealth | Fidelis | NJ Medicaid Average |
|----------------|-------|-----------|---------|--------------|---------|---------------------|
| < 1 Year       | 0.08  | 0.83      | 0.95    | 1.23         | 1.16    | 0.92                |
| 1 to 2 Years   | 8.52  | 16.6      | 24.72   | 23.39        | 25.37   | 22.01               |
| 3 to 5 Years   | 27.02 | 47.9      | 52.54   | 54.87        | 46.18   | 50.54               |
| 6 to 7 Years   | 31.11 | 56.98     | 61.42   | 63.42        | 52.24   | 59.37               |
| 8 to 9 Years   | 32.4  | 57.73     | 61.62   | 63.78        | 54.75   | 60.02               |
| 10 to 11 Years | 30.33 | 55.79     | 60.31   | 62.24        | 52.21   | 58.59               |
| 12 to 14 Years | 28.14 | 52.03     | 56.98   | 60.04        | 49.37   | 55.58               |
| 15 to 18 Years | 20.85 | 44        | 48.19   | 52.2         | 41.34   | 47.25               |

## NJ FamilyCare Results- Measure Year 2022

### Topical Fluoride for Children (TFL-CH) by percentage of enrollees

| Age Group      | Aetna | Wellpoint | Horizon | UnitedHealth | Fidelis | NJ Medicaid Average |
|----------------|-------|-----------|---------|--------------|---------|---------------------|
| 1 to 2 Years   | 5.03  | 13.99     | 12.48   | 14.66        | 16.33   | 12.68               |
| 3 to 5 Years   | 1.73  | 23.07     | 24.23   | 29.12        | 21.94   | 23.69               |
| 6 to 7 Years   | 0.57  | 25.77     | 27.33   | 32.26        | 23.25   | 26.77               |
| 8 to 9 Years   | 0.61  | 25.56     | 26.39   | 32.79        | 23.73   | 26.47               |
| 10 to 11 Years | 0.44  | 22.93     | 25.24   | 30.37        | 20.76   | 24.91               |
| 12 to 14 Years | 0.23  | 19.33     | 21.69   | 27.13        | 18.63   | 21.65               |
| 15 to 18 Years | 0.1   | 10.73     | 13.64   | 17.31        | 10.9    | 13.5                |

## NJ FamilyCare Results- Measure Year 2022

### Sealant Receipt on Permanent First Molars (SFM-CH) by percentage of enrollees

| Rate Type                       | Aetna | Wellpoint | Horizon | UnitedHealth | Fidelis | NJ Medicaid Average |
|---------------------------------|-------|-----------|---------|--------------|---------|---------------------|
| Rate 1 (At Least One Sealant)   | 23.78 | 20.32     | 7.59    | 37.86        | 46.62   | 17.33               |
| Rate 2 (All Four Molars Sealed) | 14.4  | 10.76     | 4.09    | 22.42        | 31.06   | 9.99                |



# Importance of Oral Health

## Keeping Your Child's Smile Healthy

All children are at risk for tooth decay and gum disease. Both are preventable and you can play a key role in your child's oral health. Healthy "baby" teeth and permanent teeth are important to your child's overall health and wellness!



### Take your child to the dentist by their First Birthday

- All children should visit the dentist when their first tooth comes in. Seeing the dentist to prevent disease helps keep your child healthy.
- Their pediatrician can give a referral to the dentist at your regular visit and must refer your child to the dentist by their first birthday.
- Your child should visit the dentist twice a year. These visits include an oral exam, X-rays if needed, and preventive services that include cleaning, a fluoride application and instructions to parents/caregivers on how to keep your child's teeth clean.
- Make and keep scheduled dental visits and make sure that all needed treatment is completed.

## Dental Services for Children in NJ FamilyCare

Your child should have a dental home. A dental home is where your child receives all of their dental care in a compassionate, caring, family-focused setting. Your NJ FamilyCare health plan will work with you to find a dental home for your child by their first birthday. Please call the Dental Benefits number on your I.D. card or visit your health plan's website for assistance.

**Your child cannot have good overall health without good oral health.**

| Dental Service by Dental Professional                 | 0-1 yr | 2-6 yrs | 7-20 yrs |
|---|--------|---------|----------|
| <b>A1. Oral Evaluation (Exam)</b>                     | yes    | yes     | yes      |
| <b>2. Caries/Cavities Risk Assessment</b>             | yes    | yes     | yes      |
| <b>B. Fluoride Supplements</b>                        | yes    | yes     | yes      |
| <b>C. Fluoride Varnish*</b>                           | yes    | yes     | yes      |
| <b>D. Prophylaxis with Fluoride</b>                   |        | yes     | yes      |
| <b>E. Sealants</b><br>(Permanent teeth to age 16 yrs) |        | yes     | yes      |
| <b>F. Radiographs/x-rays</b><br>(Non-emergency)       | yes    | yes     | yes      |
| <b>G. Dental Treatment</b>                            | yes    | yes     | yes      |

- ♦ **Oral Evaluations** (including oral hygiene instructions), **Fluoride varnish** and **Cleanings** with fluoride can be provided twice a year or more frequently based on medical necessity and for children with special health care needs.
- ♦ A prescription for **fluoride supplements** may be given by either your dentist or primary care provider (PCP) to help prevent cavities.
- ♦ \*The application of **fluoride varnish** to protect teeth from cavities can also be done for children through the age of 5 by their PCP followed by a referral to the dentist for an oral evaluation, X-rays as needed, cleaning and dental treatment.
- ♦ A **Caries/Cavities Risk Assessment** – should be done once a year to determine your child's risk of developing cavities. The visit includes an oral evaluation, instructions on brushing, oral health, safety and nutritional counselling to parents/caregivers and children.
- ♦ **Sealants and repairs of sealants** should be provided to premolars and permanent molars of children between the ages of 6 through 16 to help prevent cavities
- ♦ **Dental treatment** services for primary "baby teeth" and permanent teeth include: **fillings, stainless steel crowns, treatment for toothache and extractions** and should be provided when recommended by your child's dentist.

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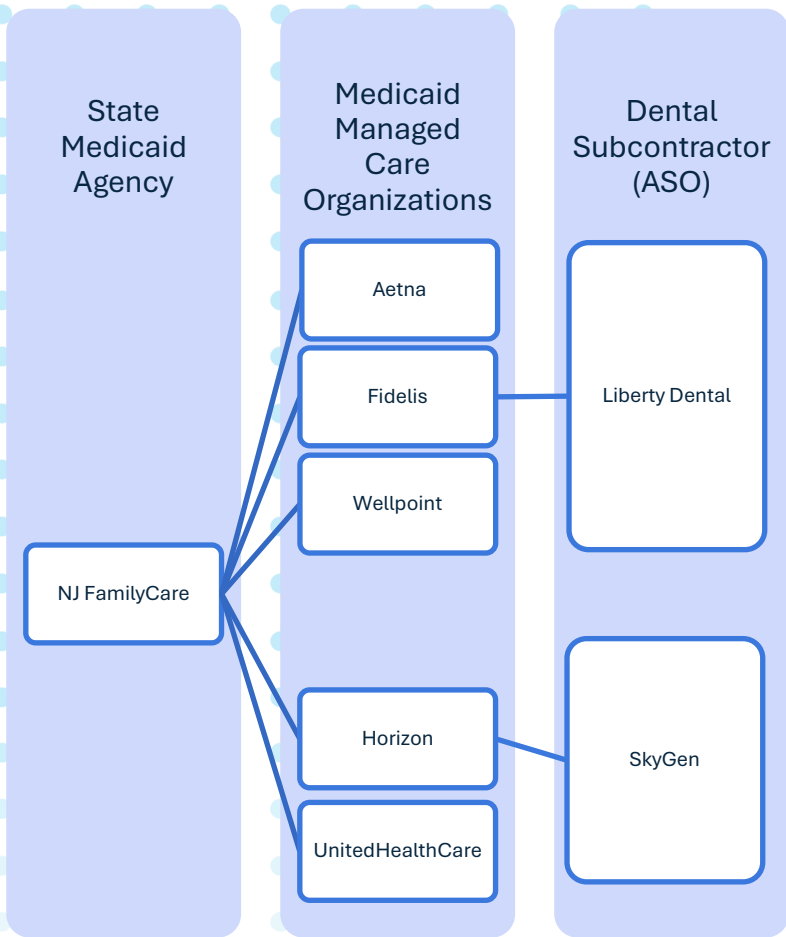
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# New Jersey's Promise of Dental Home by Age One

A dental home is where a child receives all their dental care in a compassionate, caring, family-focused setting.

Your NJ FamilyCare health plan will work with you to find a dental home for your child by their first birthday.

| Dental Service by Dental Professional                 | 0-1 yr | 2-6 yrs | 7-20 yrs |
|---|--------|---------|----------|
| <b>A1.</b> Oral Evaluation (Exam)                     | yes    | yes     | yes      |
| <b>2.</b> Caries/Cavities Risk Assessment             | yes    | yes     | yes      |
| <b>B.</b> Fluoride Supplements                        | yes    | yes     | yes      |
| <b>C.</b> Fluoride Varnish*                           | yes    | yes     | yes      |
| <b>D.</b> Prophylaxis with Fluoride                   |        | yes     | yes      |
| <b>E.</b> Sealants<br>(Permanent teeth to age 16 yrs) |        | yes     | yes      |
| <b>F.</b> Radiographs/x-rays<br>(Non-emergency)       | yes    | yes     | yes      |
| <b>G.</b> Dental Treatment                            | yes    | yes     | yes      |



## Dental Care Access Required in NJ FamilyCare MCO Contract

**Provider Directory Requirements:** Separate listing of dental providers who provide dental services to members under the age of six ; These listings shall be updated as needed and at a minimum quarterly. (section 4.8.4.c)

Include and make available sufficient number of primary care dentists; Pediatric dentists shall be included in the network and may be both primary care and specialty care providing primary care ratio limits are maintained. (section 4.8.8.A.2).

For dental appointments, be able to provide routine non-symptomatic care and/or specialist referrals within twenty-eight (28) days of member request. (section 5.12.N)

The Flow Chart to the left is the shifting of financial risk, but **responsibility to the children** remains with the state and MCOs.

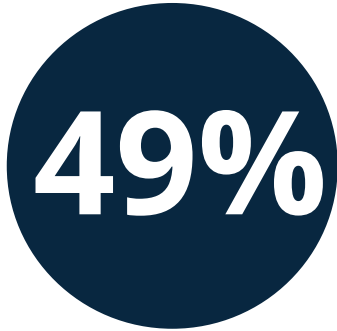
## Quality Institute Secret Shopper Research Questions

**Q1:** Of the practices listed in Medicaid Managed Care Organization (MCO) dental provider directories as serving children aged 0-6, what percentage offer appointments for patients in this age group?

**Q2:** Of the practices listed in the MCO provider directories as serving children aged 0-6, what percentage of the information listed is accurate?



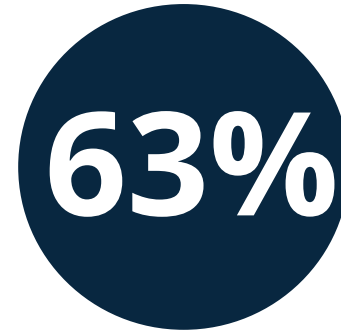
## Results



The MCO 0-6 directories were accurate **49%** of the time regarding **providing care for a 2-year old**.

**51%** of the time the practice said they **did not schedule appointments** for **2-year olds**.

## Results



Of the practices listed in the MCO 0-6 directories reported that they **were in-network with the the MCO** at the time of the call.

The balance of the time, **(37%)** the practices reported they did **not accept that insurance**.

## Patient Access Areas of Concern

Providers with waiting lists of 6 months long.

Providers with waiting of 300+ names long.

First appointments are exams only, not cleanings.

Overall, provider representatives on the phone have common misconceptions about what age is appropriate to begin seeing a dentist.

## 0-6 Year Old Network Directory Areas of Concern

51% listed on the 0-6-  
directory do not accept  
children aged 2 years old

37% listed do not accept  
the insurance for which  
they were listed in that  
MCO 0-6 directory

14% of practices were  
unreachable, with no  
answer after two attempts  
to call; 4% couldn't be  
reached because the  
wrong number was listed

Appointment Availability:  
Average  
Wait Time: 31.54 days

# Background & Additional Data





## Secret Shopper Methodology

### Script Design:

Created a script for scheduling dental appointments, including specific questions and responses.

### Practice Selection:

Chose practices from all five Medicaid MCO Directories of Dentists Treating Children under the Age of 6. Only general and pediatric dentists were chosen (824). This included FQHCs.

### Process:

**All 824 practices were called.**

Attempted to schedule an appointment for a two-year-old child.



## New Jersey Statewide Secret Shopper Results

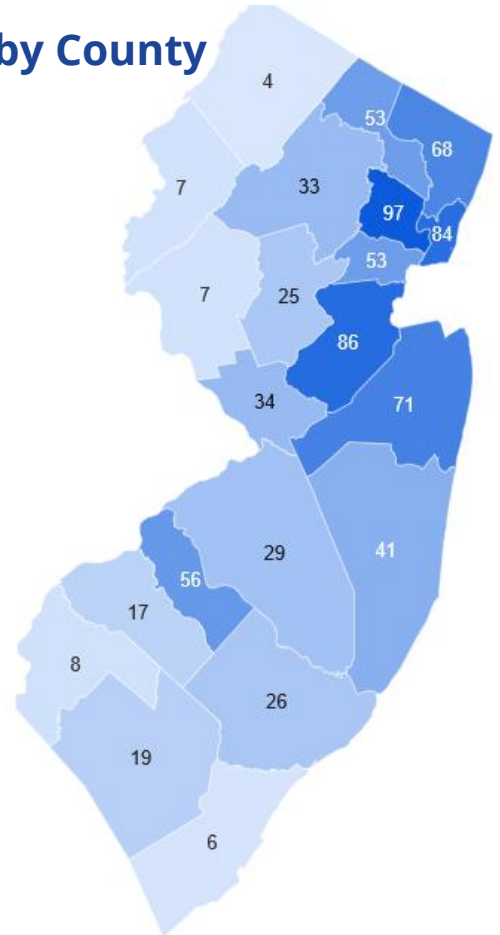
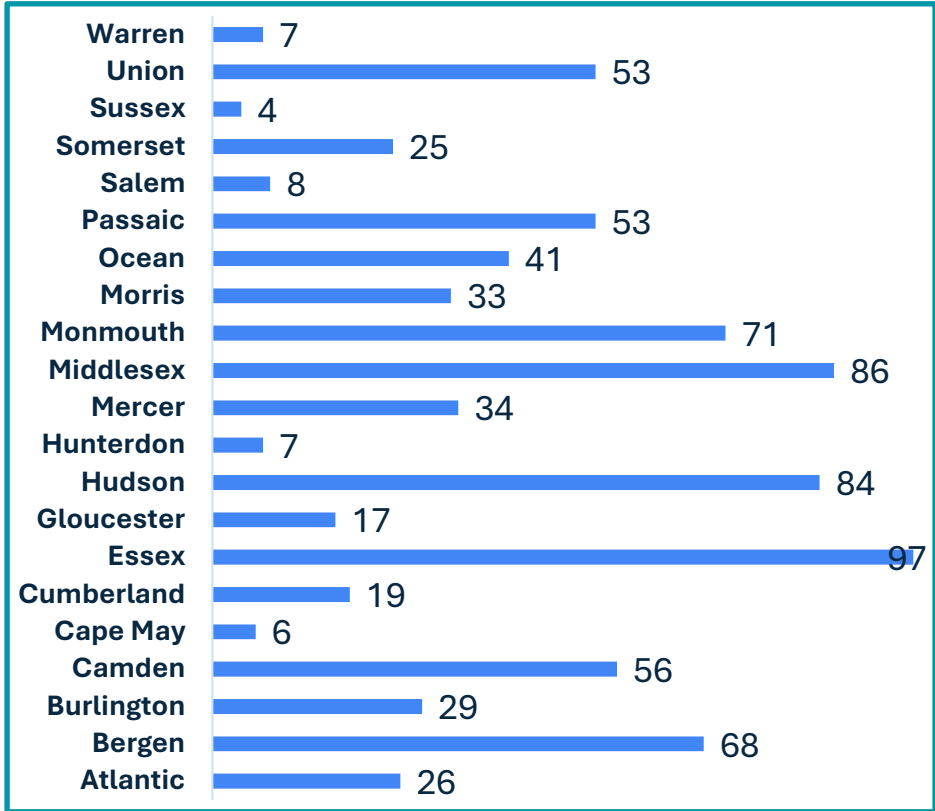
New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute - July 2024

| Statistics                             | Results         |
|--|-----------------|
| Number of Listed Practices             | 824 offices     |
| Reached Practices                      | 86.04%          |
| Unreachable Practices                  | 13.96%          |
| Incorrect Phone Number                 | 4.25%           |
| Actual Matches Directory for Age       | 49.03%          |
| Actual Matches Directory for Insurance | 63.23%          |
| Offering Multiple MCOs                 | 62.14%          |
| Not Accepting New Patients             | 2.18%           |
| Hold Time                              | 9 mins          |
| Average Appointment Date Distance      | 31.54 days away |
| Median Appointment Date Distance       | 12 days         |
| Range of Appointment Date Distance     | 0-381 days      |

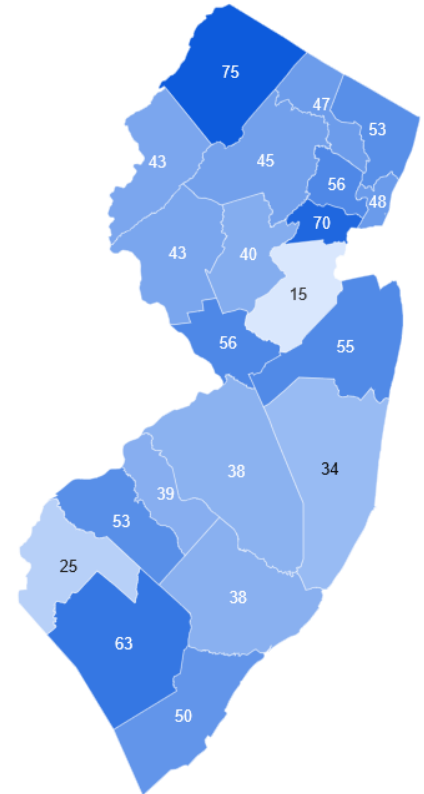
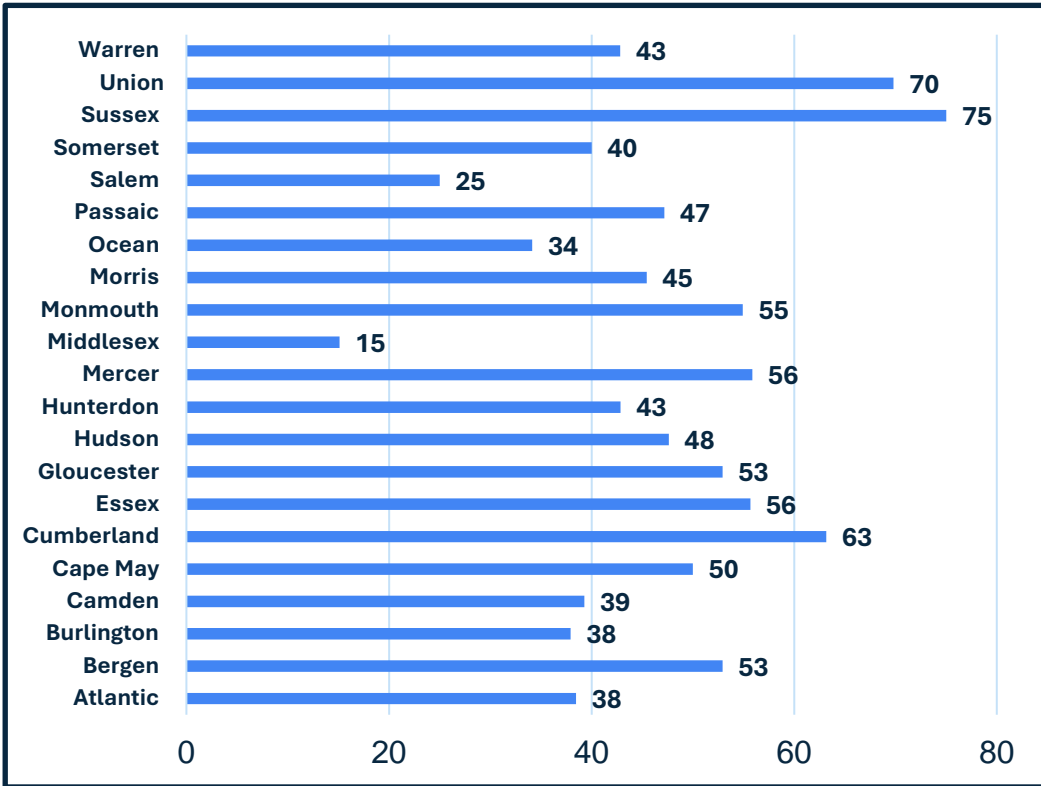
## Data Categories & Definitions

| Category                                      | Definition  |
|---|---|
| <b>Number of Listed Practices</b>             | Number of offices from all MCO directories that "Accept patients 0-6 years old" that are listed as either pediatric dentistry or general dentistry. |
| <b>Reached Practices</b>                      | Percentage of offices that were called that answered the phone and were able to respond to questions.   |
| <b>Unreachable Practices</b>                  | Percentage of offices called that did not answer after repeated attempts (at least two calls).  |
| <b>Incorrect Phone Number</b>                 | Percentage of offices that were unreachable due to an incorrect phone number listed on the directories.   |
| <b>Actual Matches Directory for Age</b>       | Percentage of offices that were able to accept appointments for patients ages 2 and up.   |
| <b>Actual Matches Directory for Insurance</b> | Percentage of offices that accepted the MCO insurance used during the call, selected randomly from the list provided.                               |
| <b>Offering Multiple MCOs</b>                 | Percentage of offices that accept multiple MCOs, extracted from the MCO directory listings.   |
| <b>Not Accepting New Patients</b>             | Percentage of offices that stated that they were no longer accepting new patients during a call.  |
| <b>Hold Time</b>                              | Maximum average wait time for calls that placed our researchers on hold.  |
| <b>Average Appointment Date Distance</b>      | Average length of time until an available appointment.  |
| <b>Median Appointment Date Distance</b>       | Median length of time until an available appointment.   |

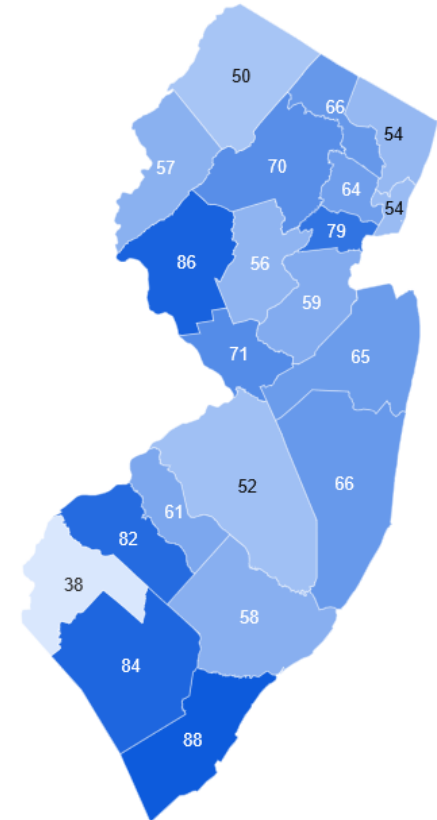
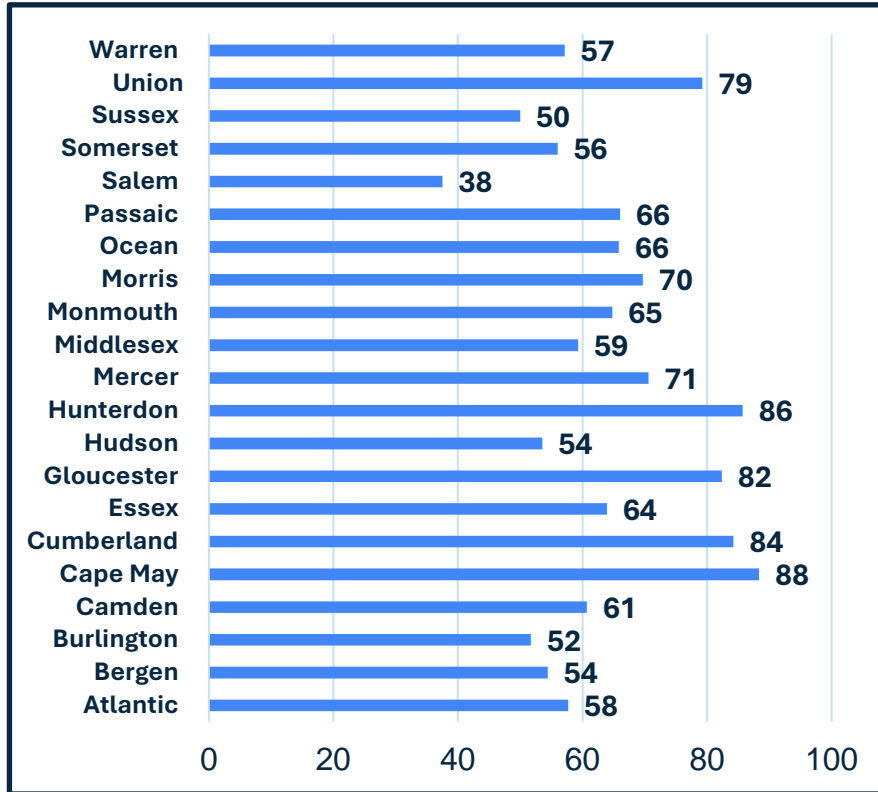
# Number of Dental Practices Listed in 0-6 Directories by County



# Percentage of the 0-6 Directory Listings With Accurate Information That Practice Provides Dental Care for Two Year Olds



# Percentage of 0-6 Directory Listings With Accurate Insurance Network Information



## Context

For context, as of July 2024, total children’s enrollment in NJ FamilyCare, **ages 0-18, was 816,774.**

Enrollment by county listed to the right.

The number of children 0-6 is not publicly available.

| County       | Total Enrollment - Children 0-18 |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Atlantic     | 29,726                           |
| Bergen       | 49,495                           |
| Burlington   | 28,696                           |
| Camden       | 54,885                           |
| Cape May     | 6,884                            |
| Cumberland   | 24,453                           |
| Essex        | 101,756                          |
| Gloucester   | 20,244                           |
| Hudson       | 74,313                           |
| Hunterdon    | 4,277                            |
| Mercer       | 39,123                           |
| Middlesex    | 65,599                           |
| Monmouth     | 36,341                           |
| Morris       | 19,357                           |
| Ocean        | 97,139                           |
| Passaic      | 69,074                           |
| Salem        | 6,666                            |
| Somerset     | 16,720                           |
| Sussex       | 6,053                            |
| Union        | 58,187                           |
| Warren       | 7,046                            |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>816,774</b>                   |

# Thank you!

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