

The goal of the 802 Smiles Dentist Survey was to understand how Vermont dentists view 802 Smiles and to gather feedback to improve the 802 Smiles Network.

## Background

The [Alchemer](#)-based survey\* was distributed through an email invitation\*\* to all dentists licensed in Vermont. The survey asked about the dentist's role and practice, opinions about school dental/oral health programs, and views on 802 Smiles. All survey responses were anonymous. This report outlines key conclusions and notable responses to inform 802 Smiles program evaluation and improvement.

## Summary of Responses

There were 76 total participants who answered the survey and were included in the analyses. Survey responses were included in analyses if they answered questions about 802 Smiles services (questions 7-13 in [Appendix A](#)).

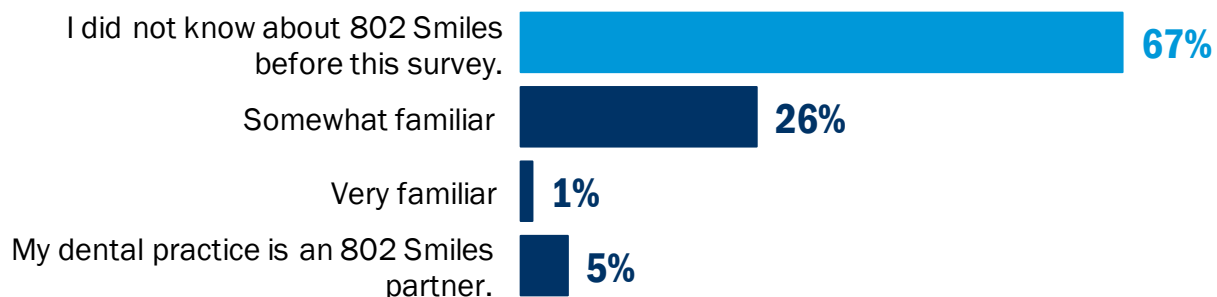
## Survey Participant Characteristics

The overall response rate was approximately 12% of dentists licensed in Vermont. Most respondents (86%) were dentists who are active in clinical practices in Vermont which care for Vermont residents. The remaining respondents included dentists active in clinical practices outside of Vermont, dentists working in non-clinical dentistry (e.g., dental public health or non-clinical faculty roles), dentists working outside the dental field, dentists that are not currently working and retired dentists.

### KEY POINTS

- Most Vermont licensed dentists are not familiar with the 802 Smiles Network.
- Dentists that are familiar with 802 Smiles recommend the program.
- There is opportunity to improve communications with Vermont's licensed dentists about 802 Smiles.

**When asked, "How would you classify your level of familiarity with 802 Smiles?" the majority of dentists responded that they were not familiar with the program.**



\* See [Appendix A](#) for 802 Smiles Dentist Survey questions.

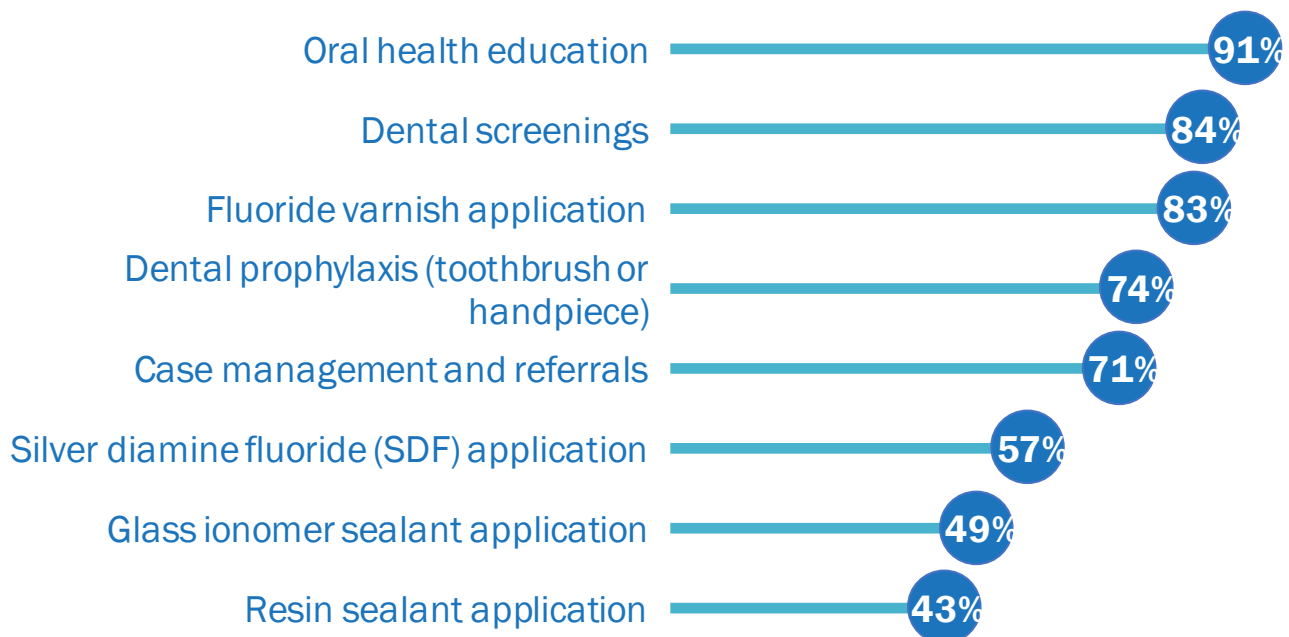
\*\* See [Appendix B](#) for 802 Smiles Dentist Survey invitation message.

## 802 Smiles Feedback

Over two-thirds of dentists participating in this survey did not know about 802 Smiles prior to receiving the survey. About one in four dentists were “somewhat familiar.” Only five were “very familiar” or identified as an 802 Smiles partner.

### There are varying levels of support for the oral health services provided by 802 Smiles in schools.

Percent of dentists who support 802 Smiles services in schools:



When asked about the services they support 802 Smiles Providers providing in schools, oral health education, dental screenings, and fluoride varnish application were the most supported. Dentists shared their concerns regarding services they did not support being provided by 802 Smiles. In general, comments were classified in the following categories:

- **Procedure should be done by a dentist and/or patient must be examined by a dentist.** Multiple dentists stated their desire to examine teeth before sealant placement or SDF treatment to ensure proper excavation of decay. Numerous survey participants also highlighted that caries diagnosis can only be performed by a dentist.
- **Procedures need to be done in a clinical setting.** There were concerns about the technical aspect of SDF and sealant applications as well as the supplies and environment needed for ideal application.

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- **Concerns with specific substances.** Multiple respondents expressed concern about SDF in terms of its permanent staining and potential for harm on teeth with deep caries (e.g., pulpitis or abscesses). Some stated concerns about the technique-sensitive nature of resin sealants and concerns for cavities developing if sealants are placed improperly.
- **Families should be involved.** Comments expressed that children's dental care should involve families making informed decisions together, along with individual hygiene and diets being reinforced at home.

### Dentists who were familiar with 802 Smiles shared their views of the program's strengths:

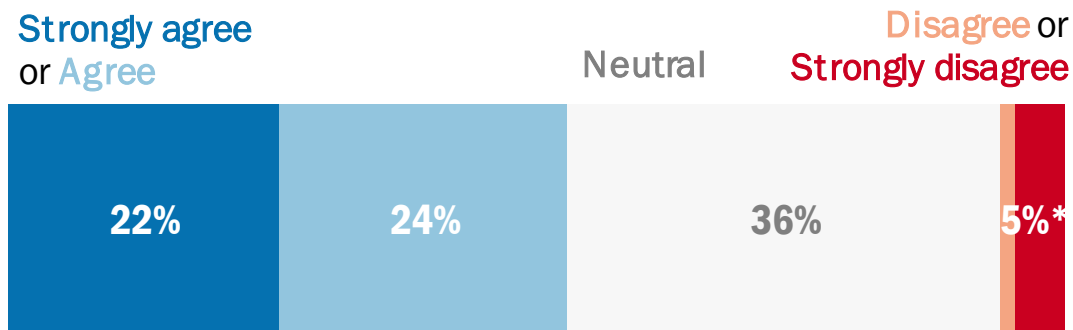
- Promotion of dental care, oral health education and advocacy.
- Increased access to oral health care for children.
- Communication with families, care coordination and referrals to dental offices for continued care (also known as establishing a dental home).
- Enthusiastic 802 Smiles Providers and dental health professionals making a difference in their communities.

### Dentists suggested 802 Smiles could improve by:

- **Emphasizing the importance of the dental home.** Increase communication between dental homes and hygienists, schools, and families to ensure they receive information about proper dental care and the importance of regular dental appointments.
- **Improving collaboration with dental offices.** Increase referrals to dental offices, ensure follow-up with dental offices and highlight program opportunities to dental hygienists.
- **Increasing awareness of the program.** Many dentists did not know about 802 Smiles prior to receiving the survey. Comments asked for increased information and transparency regarding 802 Smiles leadership structure, membership, scope and evaluation.
- **Expanding the program, lobbying for increased funding and unifying efforts.** Comments encouraged standardized workspaces, getting more dentists involved, investing in more mobile dental clinics and using remote radiologic exams for case assessment.
- **Evaluating the program.** Numerous comments expressed interest in reviewing information about success rates of care delivery, improved oral health outcomes and additional evaluation metrics. They encouraged results to be made publicly available.

Vermont dentists likely need more information about 802 Smiles to recommend it to their colleagues. Over one-third of participants ~ neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement:

**I would recommend partnering with 802 Smiles to dentist colleagues.**



~ Not all participants answered this question. Percentages will not add to 100%.

\* "5%" represents 1% who selected "disagree" and 4% who selected "strongly disagree."

**Dentists need more information about 802 Smiles.** When asked, “What would need to be different for you to recommend 802 Smiles to your dentist colleagues?” many replied they need to know more about the program. Multiple comments highlighted the importance of gaining the trust and support of Vermont dentists. Numerous want the program to better emphasize and prioritize the need for a dental home. One comment said support would depend on reimbursement. Another comment emphasized the need to respect the importance and distinction of the roles of dentist versus dental hygienist when trying to solve public health problems.

**Other Feedback:** There needs to be more communication, better promotion, and more readily available information about how 802 Smiles functions. A few responses suggested more dentists need to be involved in 802 Smiles, particularly dentists who accept Medicaid; Related, there need to be more opportunities for dentists to care for underserved populations. Comments emphasized that the program should aim to match all kids in Vermont to a dental home, which is one of the primary goals of 802 Smiles.

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## Limitations

Timing of summer vacations, bandwidth of dental professionals and knowledge of the 802 Smiles program may have limited the response rate. Sampling bias and/or non-response bias may be present as the survey was sent via email and available online only. There were no phone surveys or paper copies distributed.

## Key Takeaways

Dentists want to be more involved with 802 Smiles. From improved communication and promotion, input on services and offerings and collaboration on overall dental health as a public health priority, dentists feel they need to be more familiar with the program and part of the decision-making process. This pilot 802 Smiles Dentist Survey was a valuable tool for collecting feedback from Vermont licensed dentists. It may be helpful as a bi-annual survey for future evaluation and program improvement efforts.

## Next Steps

The Office of Oral Health at the Vermont Department of Health will continue numerous efforts to address the concerns and feedback received through this survey, including:

- Increase outreach to Vermont dentists and promote 802 Smiles.
- Update the [802 Smiles website](#) to become a one-stop resource for 802 Smiles initiatives.
- Future program evaluations supported by the [Cooperative Agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) will be assessed and reported as the program becomes established.
- Evaluate methods of outreach to improve response rates and collect more feedback on the next survey.

For more information: Stephanie Stead, [VTOralHealth@vermont.gov](mailto:VTOralHealth@vermont.gov)

## Appendix A – 802 Smiles Dentist Survey questions.

### General Questions:

1. How would you classify your level of familiarity with **802 Smiles**?
  - I did not know about 802 Smiles before this survey.
  - Somewhat familiar
  - Very familiar
  - My dental practice is an 802 Smiles partner.
2. Please check **all** of the boxes that describe your practice as a dentist:
  - Active in clinical practice in Vermont which cares for Vermont residents
  - Active in clinical practice outside Vermont which cares for Vermont residents
  - Actively working in non-clinical dentistry (e.g., working in dental public health or non-clinical dental faculty roles)
  - Actively working in a field other than dentistry
  - Not currently working
  - Retired
  - Other – please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

### Dental Practice Information

3. What dental insurances are accepted at the dental practice that you primarily work at?  
Please select all that apply.
  - Private / Commercial (e.g., Delta Dental)
  - Medicaid
  - Medicare
  - TRICARE
  - Other – write in: \_\_\_\_\_
4. **In the past year**, did your practice have to turn away potential new patients?
  - Yes
  - No
5. If yes, what are the primary reasons your practice was unable to accept these potential new patients? Please select all that apply.
  - We do not accept the patient's insurance.
  - We do not have enough dentists.
  - We do not have enough dental hygienists, assistants, and other staff.
  - Patient history (e.g., missed appointments, unpaid bills, unruly behavior).
  - Other – please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Does your practice have a wait list?

- Yes
- No
- Other – please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

### 802 Smiles Services:

7. Which of the following services do you support **802 Smiles Providers** (i.e., dental hygienists or dental assistants, as allowable under their scope of work) providing in schools? Please select all that apply.

- Oral health education
- Dental screenings
- Dental prophylaxis (toothbrush or handpiece)
- Case management and referrals
- Fluoride varnish application
- Silver diamine fluoride application
- Glass ionomer sealant application
- Resin sealant application
- Other services – please describe: \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

8. For the services you did not list being in support of in the previous question, please use this space to describe **why** you are not supportive of those services being offered by an **802 Smiles Provider** in schools.

### 802 Smiles Feedback

9. What strengths do you see in **802 Smiles**? What is working well?

10. What are some ways **802 Smiles** can improve?

11. **802 Smiles** partners with local dental practices to provide comprehensive care to Vermont children. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statement: **I would recommend partnering with 802 Smiles to my dentist colleagues.**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12. What would need to be different for you to recommend **802 Smiles** to your dentist colleagues?

13. What other feedback would you like to share about **802 Smiles** that was not addressed in the previous questions? Please feel free to share any thoughts (positive or negative) or suggestions for improvement.

### VOHAP

14. Are you interested in being added to the Vermont Oral Health Advisory Panel (VOHAP) email list and/or the 802 Smiles Advisory Group?

The VOHAP is a group of people who are interested in promoting oral health equity in Vermont. The group meets quarterly for two hours to learn about topics related to dental public health. In addition, opportunities arise to work on ad-hoc projects. Most recently, members of the VOHAP updated our Vermont Oral Health Plan. Being added to the VOHAP email list will keep you informed of these opportunities and give you access to the quarterly newsletter from the Office of Oral Health at the Vermont Department of Health.

The 802 Smiles Advisory Group includes supporters of 802 Smiles including public health professionals, active and retired dental professionals, school liaisons, and more. The group meets monthly for one hour to work on projects to improve the 802 Smiles Network and support its sustainability.

- Yes
- No
- I am already a member of one or both groups.



### Appendix B – This survey invitation email was sent to dentists licensed in Vermont.

Hello, you are receiving this email because you are a dentist licensed in Vermont.

The Health Department coordinates the 802 Smiles Network of School Dental Health Programs; we are hoping to get your feedback through this quick (5-minute survey).

We hope to use the feedback provided through this survey to improve **802 Smiles** and strengthen our connections with the dental community.

Your participation is voluntary, and your responses will remain anonymous. All data will remain confidential and aggregate results from this survey will be used by the Office of Oral Health at the Vermont Department of Health to evaluate and improve **802 Smiles**.

Please consider taking this very quick (5 minute) survey by June 30<sup>th</sup>; your input is very valuable to us:

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7153499/802-Smiles-Dental-Community-Survey>

Thanks very much for all that you do,  
Robin

Robin Miller, RDH, MPH – she/her [\(why?\)](#)

Oral Health Director

Vermont Department of Health