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Policy Pick: Topical Fluoride Varnish and AB 667

According to the [California Dental Association](#) [1], tooth decay affects over 50 percent of California's children by the time they reach kindergarten. Unfortunately, low-income children and families with no dental insurance are at greater risk since many do not visit the dentist until after primary teeth have started to decay. The Community Dental Disease Prevention Program (CDDPP) administered by California Department of Public Health through the Office of Oral Health is assisting the state's youngest at-risk residents in reducing tooth decay.

CDDPP works with local health departments and school districts to increase access to dental care through the use of fluoride varnish. Also, the CDDPP educates the public to prevent early childhood cavities, oral injuries, and dental disease. These oral health programs permit dental assistants to perform topical fluoride varnish under the general supervision of a licensed dentist. Yet, with the proper trainings and protocols, any person has the ability to apply fluoride varnish.

AB 667 authored by Assemblyman Marty Block (D-Lemon Grove) and sponsored by the California Dental Association, is legislation that clarifies that any person, including dental assistants and non-healthcare personnel, may apply topical fluoride varnish in public health and school based settings according to the prescription and protocol of a dentist or physician. AB 667 will:

- Allow a dental assistant to apply topical fluoride varnish under the general direction of a licensed dentist or physician when operating in a school-based setting or public health program.
- Specifies that any person may apply topical fluoride, including fluoride varnish, within a public health setting or public health program according to the prescription and protocol issued and established by a dentist or physician.
- Clarifies that the topical fluoride program is required to be under the direction of a licensed dentist and may include self-application or application by another person in accordance with the prescription and protocol established by a dentist

AB 667 removes a barrier to the expansion of fluoride varnish programs in public settings which will assist children in preventing tooth decay and improve oral health. AB 667 has passed the Assembly Health Committee and the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions. It has now moved to the Assembly Appropriations Committee for fiscal review.

Please contact Palanda Brownlow, policy analyst at (213) 482-7579 for more information on AB 667.

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[1] <http://www.cda.org/>

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