

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: HB 338

49th Legislature, 1st Session, 2009

Short Title: Study Preschool Dental Exams for Children

Sponsor(s): Representative Rick Miera and Others

Analyst: James Ball

Date: February 4, 2009

Bill Summary:

HB 338 makes an appropriation for the Department of Health (DOH) to conduct a study, in conjunction with the Public Education Department (PED), to evaluate the costs and benefits of requiring dental examinations for all children prior to entering school or preschool.

Fiscal Impact:

\$10,000 is appropriated to DOH from the General Fund for FY 10.

Unexpended and unencumbered funds revert to the General Fund.

Fiscal Issues:

According to DOH, previous projections have determined that a feasibility study of this type would cost an estimated \$133,635.

Issues:

In its analysis of HB 338, PED identifies several points that require clarification:

- Is the phrase “all children entering school” intended to include all children regardless of grade when enrolling in any new school, or does it mean kindergarten or preschool, the age most children begin their education?
- Is the study to include not only children in public schools but also children in private schools and home schools?
- Is a report or product expected, and to whom is it to be presented?

Background:

According to DOH, oral disease may be the most preventable health condition affecting the U.S. population. Sufficient tools and technology exist to prevent and control oral disease, but the outcomes have not reflected these advances. Tooth decay is the most common childhood disease. The 2000 New Mexico Children’s Oral Health Surveillance Survey (NMOHSS) found that:

- 65 percent of children enrolled in a public school had experienced tooth decay;
- 37 percent had untreated tooth decay;
- 27 percent of third grade children were unable to obtain needed dental care within a given year; and
- 10 percent of these children had never been to a dentist.

DOH also states that, in order to reduce the incidence of dental cavities and to ensure that a healthy child starts school, a number of states and the District of Columbia have implemented legislation mandating a dental exam prior to entering the school system. Federal regulations require any child attending a Head Start program to have a dental examination. Through these mandates, states ensure that children have an opportunity to receive preventive oral health and treatment services, and thereby improving their oral health, their overall health, and their educational experience.

Related Bills:

None as of 02-04-2009.