In Illinois, one in five children with special health care needs (CSHCN) have oral health problems. CSHCN are defined by the Department of Health and Human Services as: “those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally.”

Figure 1 shows the proportion of Illinois children, ages 1-17, whose parent or guardian reported their child having toothaches, decayed teeth and/or unfilled cavities in the past twelve months across two groups: children with and without special health care needs. The top bar in the figure shows that 20.2% of children with special healthcare needs had one or more aforementioned oral health problems. Shown in the bottom bar is the rate, 14.2%, for children without special health care needs. The difference between the two groups was not statistically significant.

Oral health is one of the areas where children with special health care needs frequently have unmet health care needs. National data suggested that a significantly higher rate of children with special health care needs had oral health problems compared to children without special health care needs, 22.0% vs. 17.9%, respectively.

References