Topical Fluoride Recommendations for High-Risk Children:

Development of a Decision Support Matrix
Dental caries is the most common chronic childhood disease in the United States.

The prevalence of dental caries has increased among young children.

Fluoride is effective in preventing and controlling dental caries.

Children most affected by disparities in oral health could benefit from fluoride exposure beyond water fluoridation.
Meeting Purpose

- The Maternal and Child Health Bureau convened an expert panel on October 22-23, 2007 to develop a decision support matrix on topical fluoride use for children at high risk for dental caries.

- Meeting purpose
  - Review the knowledge base and professional guidelines on topical fluoride.
  - Review the concept of risk.
  - Define children at high risk for dental caries.
Intended Outcomes of Meeting

- Identify risk factors and settings using fluoride interventions with children at high risk.
- Develop a decision support matrix to assist in the design of fluoride varnish interventions for children at high risk.
Decision Support Matrix

- Intended to support the implementation of a fluoride intervention that complements other health-promotion and disease-prevention activities.
- Developed primarily for use by paraprofessionals and non-oral-health professionals who work in public health settings.
- Can also be used by parents.
The expert panel discussed the following issues:

- The concept of risk.
- How best to categorize and assess dental caries risk for young children.
- Individual risk criteria.
- Risk-assessment tools that professional dental and medical organizations have developed.
The expert panel concluded that:

- A population-based approach for assessing risk is needed.
- Children enrolled in programs where low socioeconomic status, specifically income, is an eligibility requirement (e.g., Head Start, WIC) are in the high-risk category.
- Children with special health care needs are in the high-risk category.
Expert panel recommendations for children ages 6 and under who are at high risk for dental caries.

- **Drinking water.** Community water fluoridation should be part of a comprehensive population-based strategy to prevent dental caries.

- **Fluoride toothpaste.** A “smear” of toothpaste is recommended for children under age 2, and a “pea size” amount of toothpaste is recommended for children ages 2–6.
Expert panel recommendations for children ages 6 and under who are at high risk for dental caries (continued).

- **Fluoride varnish.** Fluoride varnish should be applied every 3–6 months.

- **Fluoride mouth rinses, gels, or foams.** Rinses, gels, or foams are not recommended for children under age 6.
Next Steps

- Share the matrix with program staff, practitioners, and other audiences.
- Share the matrix with associations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Dental Association, and the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors.
- Solicit feedback on the matrix from relevant professional dental and medical organizations.
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Development of Decision Support Matrix

Recommendations from MCHB Expert Panel

October 22–23, 2007
Altarum Institute
Washington, DC

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