

BEST PRACTICES FOR ADDRESSING DENTAL NEEDS IN SCHOOLS

Partnering with dental programs is a great way to ensure that students have access to dental care at least once a year. There are organizations across the city that work with the Office of School Health to provide students with dental exams and on-site treatment for some dental problems. Whether your school provides dental services or you want to encourage parents to visit resources available in the community, these best practices will help promote dental hygiene in your school!

- If your school provides on-site screenings, **notify parents and receive consent**. Letters should be sent to parents explaining the services provided and health education information on why dental pain is a health barrier to learning. Instructions for filling out consent forms should also be included, especially if the form asks for insurance information.
 - **Provide incentives** for returning consent. Call parents to thank them for handing in the correct paperwork. Let them know that after on-site screenings, students will usually receive toothbrushes and toothpaste to bring home.
 - **Remind parents** when the screenings will take place so students are in attendance!
- **Call parents** if a child has been complaining of dental pain or has noticeable dental problems. Dental pain and visible tooth decay may indicate that urgent care is necessary. Connect families to local dental providers in the community. You can also encourage a parent to call their child's pediatrician who may be able to provide them with a dental provider recommendation.
- **Promote dental hygiene in school!** February is Children's Dental Health Month. Remind parents to schedule dentist appointments for their child, decorate bulletin boards by the main office, and send parents fact sheets about promoting dental hygiene at home. If you are having snacks in class, avoid sticky and sugary foods and drinks.
- **Hold workshops for children and parents to attend together**. Teach families about building healthy dental habits and the proper way to brush! If you have partnerships with dental organizations, try to provide giveaways like free toothbrushes, toothpaste, and stickers for students. These can be used as incentives to increase participation.