



Education is a Critical Aspect of Good Oral Health

Overview and Background Facts:

Under the Illinois Dental Practice Act (225 ILCS 25/18 f), dental hygienists may, without any dentist supervision, perform dental health education functions.

Comments:

Oral health education is an often overlooked topic that should play a key role in preventing disease. Since private insurance and state Medicaid programs do not reimburse any provider for conducting individual or group oral health education, education is often not a priority.

The Illinois Medicaid population would benefit greatly from having access to some basic level of oral health education. Medicaid has recently focused on increasing the number of children that receive preventive services. While this is important, some effort and resources could be spent on allowing oral health professionals to provide education at public clinics, WIC and HeadStart programs.

ISDS Position Statement:

Basic oral health education is an important and often overlooked aspect of prevention. Properly trained oral health professionals should be better incorporated into local public infrastructures to provide oral health education to WIC, HeadStart, parenting and other community-based programs.

ISDS should consider an additional level of oral health care professional that focuses on education.

ISDS should encourage all public health departments to employ an oral health professional whose principal responsibility is to serve as an oral health educator.