



## School Based Oral Health Prevention Programs

### Overview and Background Facts:

School based oral health prevention programs have been around for a number of years and have typically provided school children, with the consent of a parent, a basic oral examination, a prophylaxis, fluoride treatment and sealants. Most programs focus on providing care to the Medicaid population or for those enrolled in subsidized lunch programs. Some local schools require that the program be made available to all children in the school.

In most cases, these programs are developed by dentists and utilize portable dental equipment. In some cases, a dental team is used and following an examination by a dentist, a dental hygienist may provide care under general supervision.

As of July 1, 2005 Illinois law requires all children in kindergarten, 2nd and 6th grade to have a dental examination by the end of the school year.

For over 20 years, the Illinois Department of Public Health has provided funds to county health departments that wish to conduct school-based programs for children that are enrolled in the school's free and reduced lunch program but not eligible for Medicaid.

As required by a federal court decree and effective January 1, 2006, Illinois Medicaid raised reimbursement rates for preventive health services to a level that is equal to what many dentists charge their private-pay patients. These services include the dental periodic evaluation, prophylaxis, fluoride treatments and sealants.

### Comments:

Many of these programs provide needed services to school-age children that, for various reasons, have not seen a private dentist on a regular basis. However, since Medicaid has raised reimbursement for just these procedures, it is becoming a concern that some programs are being perceived to be taking the high reimbursement/ easy to provide services and leaving local clinics and private dentists to provide the restorative care and other specialty services that have not had a reimbursement increase in decades.

When programs provide care to more than 40-50 children in a single day, at some point, the quality of care may become suspect and thus the issue of good quality assurance must be incorporated so that children are receiving the proper care they need and deserve.

### ISDS Position Statement:

ISDS supports school based oral health prevention programs that meet the following criteria:

- The program is only offered to children enrolled in Medicaid or in subsidized school lunch programs.
- The program must provide each child with an examination, prophylaxis, fluoride treatment and sealants along with a basic level of oral health education with consideration given toward the time frame for such services.
- The program must have a formal referral process to a local health department and /or local private dentists to treat the restorative care needs of the children that were detected during the examinations.
- The programs must have a quality assurance component that conducts periodic sealant retention checks.