



Dental Clinics in School Health Centers

Overview and Background Facts:

In 2005, Illinois had 49 school districts that operated School Health Centers. Only six included a dental operatory and operated an organized oral health program.

Twenty-four (24) of the 49 School Health Centers are located in Chicago, and another eight are located south of U.S. I-64 in southern Illinois.

School Health Centers are considered “safety net providers” and primarily serve low-income children that have not received routine primary health care services.

According to the Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers, School Health Centers usually offer routine physical exams, immunizations, help in managing chronic illness, diagnosis of sexually transmitted diseases, family planning, mental health counseling, and prenatal care for pregnant students.

Most public health studies indicate that dental caries is the most common untreated disease in school age children.

Comments:

A well-designed School Health Center that offers oral health services needs to focus its efforts and limit its services to school children, ideally low-income and Medicaid children. Programs that allow parents, school faculty and staff to utilize the oral health services are taking away appointment times and diverting the limited resources from the school children and are not responding to the School Health Centers major goals.

ISDS Position Statement:

In some cases, public clinics are expanding their ability to provide dental services by placing dental operatories in public schools. ISDS supports these efforts as long as they are limited to providing dental services to the Medicaid and other underserved children in the school.