



# Tooth Talk Tips

Working with Schools

Many dental programs are successfully utilizing a school-based approach to providing dental care to children. Programs vary from having an on-site dental clinic to transporting children during school hours to an off-site dental clinic.

Providers working with school-based programs report that the following steps are vital to ensure successful programs

## **CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT:** understand, among other things:

- How many schools are in your area,
- How many students need to be served, (*the number of students participating in the free and reduced lunch program can be very helpful in determining the number of students that will benefit from a dental program, this information is available at the department of education website:*  
<http://doe.virginia.gov/support/nutrition/statistics/index.shtml>
- What is currently being done at the schools to provide health care (*i.e.: is there a school nurse? What are his/her responsibilities*)
- How and where (*if at all*) students are receiving dental care currently?
- What other dental programs are in place in your area?

## **COMMUNICATE WITH EVERYONE**

- Work with the schools from the onset,
- Determine what the schools and other community agencies see as the biggest obstacle to providing dental care to school-age children,
- Identify champions for a school-based program such as a school principal, health department dentist or administrator, school nurse...
- Work with local health department and community services agency
  - What programs are currently available for school age children in need of dental care?
  - Are state and local agencies interested in assisting with a school-based dental program? If so in what way will they help?
- Survey local parents
  - Is oral health care a priority?
  - What do they see as the biggest obstacles for accessing dental care for their children?
  - How would they like to see a school-based dental program operate?



# Tooth Talk Tips Cont'd

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**HAVE A LOGISTICS PLAN:** Inadequate planning of logistics will stymie the best intentions some that are often overlooked (***this is not an all-inclusive list***) include:

**TRANSPORTATION:** If transportation is necessary, create a transportation plan that identifies what will be used to transport the students, insurance issues, who will drive, background checks needed for the driver as well as permission slips to allow the children to be taken to and from the dental clinic.

**FAMIS/MEDICAID ENROLLMENT:**

To ensure reimbursement and sustainability for the program, create a plan to help enroll children eligible for Medicaid and FAMIS in the program. Parents can apply by phone: 1-866-87FAMIS (1-866-873-2647) or online <http://www.famis.org/> (*click on the appropriate language and then Apply on the left column*) or by downloading the forms from the website and mailing them. Have extra forms on hand for parents who may need them

**PARENTAL PERMISSION:** Do not assume the school nurse will handle permission slips, parental follow-up etc... Identify someone to handle this responsibility. Parental permission is necessary for all aspects of a school-based dental program (*screening, transportation, follow-up care*) and it can take a significant amount of time to contact parents and gain permission to treat or transport their child. The plan could include incentives for children who return permission slips in a timely fashion (*stickers, other small gifts or privileges*)

**WHAT WILL THE CLINIC DO WHEN SCHOOL IS CLOSED?** What will be the role of the program during school vacations and holidays? In addition to school closure dates, determine what the SOL (*standards of learning*) testing schedule is – students will not be able to come to the clinic during this time.