

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) Partners with the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), Healthy Smiles, Healthy Children (HSHC) and Procter & Gamble for Children's Dental Health Month 2008

Did you know that early childhood caries is the most common childhood illness? Did you know that every child should have her first dental exam at age one?

AAPD Past President Dr. Pitts Hinson and AAPD President-Elect Dr. Beverly Largent presented at the 2007 NCJFCJ Conference in New Orleans. They spent the day with all of the Model Court teams teaching Children's Dental Health 101 so that the Model Courts know how to promote good oral health of the children in our courts.

A child's dental health can affect everything from her immune system and ability to physically develop normally, to her self-esteem and relationships with her peers. When the dental health issues affect an abused and neglected child, the potential risks are even greater. Courts that hear child abuse and neglect cases are in the unique position of being able to work to improve the dental health of abused and neglected children. Moreover, the second round of the Child and Family Service Reviews will focus on dental health for the first time.

Brought to the NCJFCJ through the multidisciplinary efforts of the Medical Legal Committee created by Judge William Gladstone, AAPD and HSHC joined our Medical Legal Committee coalition of national organizations. This coalition is working to improve the physical and mental health of maltreated children at the suggestion of Commissioner Joan Ohl of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families.

Embracing the oral health needs of our children is one of the first initiatives of the Medical Legal Committee, which will highlight one health problem each year, working with the Permanency Planning for Children Department, through the Victims Act Model Courts project.

This year NCJFCJ has teamed with AAPD, HSHC and Procter & Gamble to pilot an initiative to focus on the dental health of children in abuse and neglect cases.

February 2008 is Children's Dental Health Month (CDHM). Victims Act Model Courts have volunteered to highlight the importance of dental health for abused and neglected children in their courtrooms during this month. Through collaborative efforts with their child welfare agency, partner agencies, and local dental communities, Model Courts participating in Children's Dental Month all across the country will be:

- ◆ Handing out 18,000 toothbrush kits provided by Procter & Gamble to children in hearings;
- ◆ Educating the children and families about the importance of good oral health
- ◆ Providing 18,000 brochures on dental health reviewed by AAPD and funded by HSHC;

- ◆ Displaying HSHC posters with information on dental health in the courtrooms;
- ◆ Inquiring about children's dental health at hearings; and
- ◆ Reaching out to dentists in the local community to collaborate with the court and child welfare stakeholders.

Toothbrush kits are being provided through a generous donation by Procter & Gamble, and brochures and posters are being provided by HSHC.

Former Model Court Lead Judge Cindy Lederman has spearheaded this effort for NCJFCJ.

The Victims Act Model Courts project is supported through funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the Department of Justice, and is committed to improved outcomes for abused and neglect children through implementation of best practices and systems reform efforts nationwide.