

Policy on Oral Health Care Programs for Infants, Children, and Adolescents

Originating Committee

Dental Care Programs Committee

Review Council

Council on Clinical Affairs

Adopted

1972

Revised

1976, 1992, 1995, 2002, 2006, 2011

Reaffirmed

1999

Purpose

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) recognizes the importance of education, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment necessary to maintain the oral health of infants, children, and adolescents through preventive and restorative care. Comprehensive health care cannot be achieved unless oral care is included in all health service programs.

Methods

This policy revision is based upon a review of current publications and websites of health care organizations. A PubMed® electronic search was performed using the terms “oral health policy”, “infant oral health policy”, “child oral health policy”, and “adolescent oral health policy”. Papers for review were chosen from this list and from references within selected articles.

Background

The US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) documents there exists a perception that oral health is separate from general health and, therefore, less important. By raising oral health awareness, the prevention, early detection, and management of dental, oral, and craniofacial tissues can become integrated into health care, community-based programs, and social services.¹ DHHS recognizes that oral health can have a significant impact on overall health and well-being. Major themes of the US Surgeon General’s report on “Oral Health in America”¹ include:

1. “Oral health means much more than healthy teeth.”
2. “Oral health is integral to general health.”

Accordingly, the DHHS report “National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health”² recommends:

1. Changing perceptions of the public, policymakers, and health providers regarding oral health and disease so that oral health becomes an accepted component of general health.

2. Removing known barriers between people and oral health services.
3. Accelerating the building of the scientific and evidence base, as well as the application of research findings, to improve oral health.
4. Ensuring the adequacy of public and private health personnel and resources to meet the oral health needs of all Americans and enable the integration of oral health effectively with general health. The focus is on having a responsive, competent, diverse, and flexible workforce.
5. Expanding public-private partnerships and building upon common goals to improve the oral health of those who suffer disproportionately from oral diseases.

Policy statement

The AAPD advocates that oral health care must be included in the design and provision of individual, community-based, and national health care programs to achieve comprehensive health care. This can be achieved through the recommendations of the DHHS report “National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health.”²

References

1. US Dept of Health and Human Services. Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General. Rockville, Md: US Dept of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Health; 2000.
2. US Dept of Health and Human Services. National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health. Rockville, Md: US Dept of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, National Institute of Health, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research; NIH Publication No. 03-5303, Spring 2003.