

# Policy on the Role of Pediatric Dentists as Both Primary and Specialty Care Providers

## Originating Council

Council on Clinical Affairs

## Review Council

Council on Clinical Affairs

## Adopted

2003

## Revised

2008

## Purpose

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) emphasizes that health care providers and other interested third parties must recognize the dual role that pediatric dentists play in the provision of professional oral health care, which includes both primary and specialty care services.

## Methods

This statement was based on a review of the accreditation standards for advanced specialty training programs in pediatric dentistry and the AAPD position paper on the role of pediatric dentists as primary and specialty care providers.<sup>1,2</sup> A MEDLINE search was conducted using the terms “pediatric dentist”, “pediatric specialist”, “primary care provider”, and “specialty care provider”.

## Background

“Pediatric dentistry is an age-related specialty that provides both primary and comprehensive preventive and therapeutic oral health needs for infants and children through adolescence, including those with special health care needs.”<sup>1</sup> The American Dental Association, the American Academy of General Dentistry, and the AAPD all recognize the pediatric dentist as both a primary care provider and specialty care provider. The dual role of pediatric dentists is similar to that of pediatricians, gynecologists, and internists in medicine. Within the medical profession, clinicians and third-party payors recognize these physicians in a dual role and have designed payment plans to accommodate this situation.

The AAPD respects the rights of employers to negotiate health care benefits for their employees. Unfortunately, third-party payors sometimes do not recognize pediatric dentists as primary care providers. This position restricts access to pediatric dentists for children who have reached a predetermined age.

## Policy statement

The AAPD recognizes that infants, children, adolescents, and individuals with special health care needs have the right to quality oral healthcare. The AAPD encourages third party payors to recognize pediatric dentists as both primary and specialty oral health care providers and to refrain from age-related restrictions when a parent or referring clinician desires to utilize the services and expertise of a pediatric dentist to establish a dental home or for limited specialized care.

## References

1. American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation. Accreditation standards for advanced specialty education programs in pediatric dentistry. Chicago, Ill; 2000.
2. American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry Council on Dental Benefits Programs. Position paper: The role of pediatric dentists as primary and specialty care providers. Chicago, Ill; 2002.