Release for School Absences

A Message to Parents, Teachers, and School Administrators Regarding School Absences for Dental Appointments

Oral health is an integral component of overall health and well-being. Early detection and management of oral conditions can improve a child's oral health, general health and well-being, and school readiness. Oral conditions can interfere with eating and adequate nutritional intake, speaking, daily activities, and quality of life. Nutritional deficiencies during childhood can impact cognitive development. Children with dental pain may be irritable, withdrawn, or unable to concentrate, and pain can affect test performance as well as school attendance. In addition, the unesthetic nature of tooth decay and dental malocclusion also may compromise the child's self-esteem and social development. Professional dental care is medically necessary to prevent and eliminate orofacial disease, infection, and pain.

The **American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry** (**AAPD**) recognizes the importance of regular school attendance and the effect of frequent absence on academic performance. The AAPD encourages us, as members of this organization and pediatric health care specialists, to work with parents and educators to help minimize school absence. We strive to coordinate appointments that are least disruptive to a patient's academic endeavors but caution that it is not always possible or appropriate to schedule visits before or after school hours.

The AAPD also urges parents, teachers, and education administrators to work with dental professionals to ensure that children receive medically-necessary oral health care while minimizing school absences. A supportive school-absence policy for professional oral health care may reduce barriers to access and encourage school-age patients to seek dental services. School policies that deny dental visits as a legitimate justification for school absences may have a negative impact on the health and well-being of children. Consistent with the AAPD, we encourage parents to return their children to school for the remainder of the day after their dental visit(s) when possible and medically safe. In the case of an appointment later in the day, a child should attend school and be excused prior to his/her dental appointment.

School Attendance Release

Student: _____ had an appointment in this office on _____

from _____ to _____ for necessary oral health care.

Signature: _____ Date: _____