

Early Dental Home Initiative: Uniting for Children's Oral Health

Executive Summary

This policy brief underscores the importance of establishing early dental homes through collaborative efforts. By engaging pediatric associations, OBGYN associations, hospital directors, school board physicians, politicians, and parents, we can profoundly influence children's oral health, overall well-being, and alleviate healthcare burdens.

Description of the Problem

Children frequently experience neglect in oral health care, leading to enduring repercussions such as dental diseases, systemic health complications, and academic setbacks. The absence of early dental intervention perpetuates this cycle, compromising children's quality of life and overburdening healthcare systems. According to the CDC, 45.8% of children age 2-19 have untreated dental decay. Tooth decay is the most prevalent chronic childhood illness globally, yet it is largely preventable.

Importance of Dental Homes

Parents are often unsure when to start brushing their children's teeth, what toothpaste they can use, how much toothpaste, or what is normal for children's oral development. Often, first dental visits are emergency visits due to pain, facial swelling, and infection. The solution to this unfortunate and preventable series of events is making sure a child has a dental home, starting from the eruption of a child's first tooth or by 1 year of age.

A dental home is a consistent source of comprehensive dental care where the patient feels comfortable and receives individualized attention. It serves as the focal point for all dental needs, including preventive, diagnostic, and treatment services. Having a dental home is crucial as it ensures continuity of care, early detection of issues, personalized treatment plans, and patient education. By establishing a dental home early in a child's life, we can instill positive oral health habits and address concerns promptly, leading to improved overall health outcomes.

Proposed Policy Solution and Recommendations

We advocate for the creation of a simple systematic approach involving pediatric and OBGYN associations, hospital directors, school board physicians, politicians, and parents to advocate for and implement the necessity of a dental home. This encompasses all physicians and associations above to make sure student, children, and patients have a dental home. Through this early education, routine check-ups, and preventive care will be done to ensure that children maintain adequate oral health, a

positive model of dental care, and minimal preventable emergencies and traumatic healthcare experiences. Collaboration among stakeholders will be pivotal in achieving the objectives of this initiative.

Conclusion

By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and stressing the importance of early dental homes, we can revolutionize children's oral health outcomes. This not only benefits individual children but also yields broader public health advantages and optimizes resource allocation. It's imperative to unite efforts and prioritize children's oral health through the establishment of early dental homes.