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### **Implementing Mandatory Dental Guards in Pediatric Sports**

**Dental injuries are one of the most commonly preventable injuries among children involved in sports. According to the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry policy on prevention of sports-related orofacial injuries, sports-related accidents make up 10-39% of all dental injuries in children. Some studies have suggested that traumatic dental injuries can have an adverse impact on oral-health related quality of life and have long-lasting negative consequences. Sports-related injuries in children regularly affect upper front teeth and can result in a range of conditions such as fractures, dislocation of the tooth, alveolar bone fracture, or loss of the tooth. The purpose of this policy is to implement mandatory dental guards for children who engage in organized sports. By implementing this policy, we can reduce the prevalence of dental trauma in children and alleviate families of potential lifelong burden, and achieve significant financial savings by preventing the need for extensive dental treatment and ongoing care.**

**Research has shown that athletes that do not wear mouthguards are 60 times more likely to suffer from dental trauma. This significantly increases their risk of sustaining a fractured/chipped, avulsed (out of the socket), or luxated (shifted from its original position) teeth due to contact sports, such as basketball, soccer, hockey, and water polo. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), more than 5 million teeth are avulsed annually in the United States, which can accrue up to \$500 million in the cost of care. Helmets and other protective gear are mandated in many contact sports and, given the significant prevalence of avulsions and dental injuries due to sports, it is imperative that implementing dental guard policies would help further protect our pediatric athletes.**

**Our policy proposes to have:**

**1. Educational campaigns: this will allow awareness to be brought to parents, coaches, and young athletes as to risks associated with dental injuries and why dental guards are beneficial. These campaigns could i**

**nclude informational brochures, presentations during parent and coach meetings, social media outreach, and/or collaborations with schools and sport organizations. Testimonials from patients who have had experience of traumatic dental injuries due to sports would also be beneficial.**

**2. Affordable Dental Guards: Partnering with manufacturing companies to provide low-cost or free dental guards to children from low-income families would ensure that young athletes will have access to essential protection.**

**3. Enforcement: Requiring the use of dental guards during practices and games with penalties for non-compliance will help reduce traumatic dental injuries.**

**Implementing a simple cost-effective preventive measure not only protects pediatric athletes' oral health but also reduces long-term healthcare costs and promotes an awareness and culture of dental safety in sports.**