

## Talking Points for Give Kids A Smile<sup>®</sup> Spokespersons

---

Feel free to tailor these talking points and create some of your own. It's important to do more than just talk about your Give Kids A Smile<sup>®</sup> event—use the media interview as an opportunity to give reporters the “big picture” on the critical need for access to oral health care among low-income children in your state.

Reporters want brief, memorable quotes to make their stories interesting. The lay public tends to remember stories, not statistics, so try to bring the story to life by talking about some of the children you've helped with Give Kids a Smile. Then talk about what your volunteers would like to see happen to improve access to oral health care in your state.

Close to (NUMBER OF) children will receive free dental services today ranging from screenings and cleanings up to fillings and more. But I worry about the thousands of children who *aren't* here today—the ones who continue to have trouble eating, sleeping and paying attention in class because their teeth are in such bad shape.

- A one-day event like Give Kids A Smile isn't a cure-all; it's a wake-up call. It's time for politicians, parents and people who care to (STATE YOUR PROGRAM/ORGANIZATION GOAL TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO ORAL HEALTH CARE). Our children deserve a better health care system that addresses their dental health needs.
- We're proud of what we're accomplishing here today. But volunteer programs are not a health care system. Give Kids A Smile is meant to accomplish two things—help children get the dental care they so desperately need **AND** raise awareness that our children deserve a better health care system that addresses their dental health.
- We want to make good oral health a priority for all children in (STATE). We seek to educate policymakers and parents that good oral health is integral to overall health and that preventive measures like fluoridation and sealants result in long-term savings. We urge commonsense, market-based solutions and other reforms that will encourage more dentists to participate in public health insurance programs.
- Unfortunately, we are unlikely to wipe out untreated dental disease in America until we get serious about prevention at an early age.
- We should put our money where our mouths are and give the children of (YOUR STATE) something to smile about! The (NAME OF YOUR PROGRAM/ORGANIZATION NAME) strongly believes that we must revamp our dental Medicaid program in three ways. First, we should (BRIEFLY DESCRIBE GOAL #1). We also must (BRIEFLY DESCRIBE GOAL #2) and lastly, we should (BRIEFLY DESCRIBE GOAL #3).

- Oral health is integral to overall health. Untreated dental disease is painful and affects a child's physical, emotional and social development. Kids with untreated dental decay can't eat or sleep properly; they can't concentrate in school, not to mention how it affects them emotionally.
- Dental disease among kids from low-income families is epidemic. 80 percent of children's tooth decay is found in just 25 percent of children.
- About one out of four children rely on Medicaid for their health insurance coverage.
- Yet many children enrolled in Medicaid never see a dentist throughout the year.
- When state revenues begin to decline, dental care is often the first thing cut from state Medicaid budgets. Restoring the lost revenue is has proven to be a difficult and slow task.
- Here in (NAME OF STATE), our state devotes just (go to: [http://www.prnewswire.com/mnr/ada/10357/docs/states/Medicaid\\_Funding\\_for\\_Dental.pdf](http://www.prnewswire.com/mnr/ada/10357/docs/states/Medicaid_Funding_for_Dental.pdf) for the statistic) percent to dental services for young and old alike. (e.g., "Here in Oklahoma, our state devotes less than one percent to dental services for young and old alike.")
- Dentists want to be part of the solution, but we can't solve the crisis of access to care on our own. We seek to build public and private partnerships at the state and local levels to come up with common-sense solutions to help improve access to oral health.
- Solutions must happen at the state level. There are as many solutions to kids' oral health access problems as there are states in the Union. Individual states decide how to structure their public health programs. Many states should do a better job of working with dentists in designing programs that really work. Here in (STATE), we urge (DESCRIBE WHAT YOUR PROGRAM/ORGANIZATION WOULD LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO ORAL HEALTH CARE)
- Dental disease is preventable. Brushing, flossing, eating a balanced diet, regular dental visits and having access to fluoride and sealants are ways to prevent dental disease. Ultimately, the money spent on prevention saves a lot more money down the road in dental treatment.