February is National Children's Dental Health Month!

The American Dental Association is pleased to provide you with the February 2017 National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM) Program Planning Guide. This month-long national health observance brings together thousands of dedicated dental professionals, health care providers and others to promote the benefits of good oral health to children and adults, caregivers, teachers and many others.

The NCDHM Program Planning Guide offers program coordinators resources to promote the benefits of good oral health to children. The guide includes easy-to-do activities, program planning timetable tips, a sample NCDHM proclamation and much, much more.

This year's NCDHM campaign slogan, "Choose Tap Water for a Sparkling Smile" is displayed in English on one side of the poster and in Spanish on the reverse side. In addition to the campaign slogan, the message "I love tap water" is displayed as emoji, with the familiar NCDHM characters – the Smileys, McGrinns and K9 featured in the poster design, having fun climbing and sliding on and around the emoji.

These versatile materials will help speakers, teachers, and others who want to address both age groups. To order the FREE posters and download materials, visit the NCDHM website at ADA.org/ncdhm.

National Children's Dental Health Month Fact Sheet

National Children's Dental Health observances began with a one-day event in Cleveland, Ohio and a one-week event in Akron, Ohio during February 1941.

Since then, the concept has grown from a two-city event into a nationwide program. The American Dental Association held the first national observance of Children's Dental Health Day on February 8, 1949. The single day observance became a weeklong event in 1955. And in 1981, the program was extended to a month-long celebration known today as National Children's Dental Health Month.

NCDHM messages reach millions of people in communities across the country and at numerous armed service bases. Local observances often include poster, coloring and essay contests, health fairs, free dental screenings, museum exhibits, classroom presentations and dental office tours.

Attitudes and habits established at an early age are critical in maintaining good oral health throughout life. By participating in the annual celebration of National Children's Dental Health Month, members of the dental team, parents, teachers and others can help keep children's smiles beautiful now and for years to come.

Proclamations for National Children's Dental Health Month

A proclamation officially launches National Children's Dental Health Month in an upbeat, newsworthy way. Proclamation signings usually take place in a city hall or civic center. Contact the elected official's press secretary well in advance to inquire about scheduling such an event. Once scheduled, invite other dignitaries and the media to witness the signing.

A state dental society often works with the governor's office to have a proclamation signed. Local dental societies can make similar arrangements for mayoral proclamations.

The official's office staff may prepare the proclamation using official stationery. Fill in the blanks below with appropriate information.

Sample Proclamation

WHEREAS, the future is, to a large measure, dependent on the good health of our families;

WHEREAS, good health can be achieved in part through good dental habits learned early and reinforced throughout life;

BE IT RESOLVED, that I_____(Governor/Mayor) of

_____thereby proclaim the month of February as Children's Dental Health Month and urge that all citizens and community organizations join in this observance.

IN W ITNESS W HEREOF, I hereunto set my hand and cause the seal of (City/State) to be affixed this_____day of February, (Year).

_____

(Signature of Official)

Program Planning Timetable Tips

October

- **October 1** - Sign up for GKAS Day
- Invite volunteers to a planning meeting to create increased oral health awareness in your community with special promotional activities or events.
- Consider inviting educators, health professionals, and religious and political leaders.
- Identify the community's oral health needs
    - Access to care?
    - Early childhood caries (cavities)?
    - Sealant education?
    - Tooth decay?
    - Tobacco use?
    - Sports injuries?
    - Junk food?
    - School vending machines?
    - Methamphetamine use?
- Determine how you might address those needs.
- Decide whether to provide information, preventive or restorative treatment, or all three.
- Define campaign goals and select spokespersons, mascot and/or tooth fairy.
- Determine a budget (if necessary); appoint subcommittees and select activities for February.
- Contact possible co-sponsors (schools, hospitals, libraries, etc.). Consider conducting a coloring, poster or essay contest. See Ideas for Easy-to-Do Activities for additional information.

November

- Order the FREE NCDHM Posters online
- Send confirmation letters to participating organizations.
- Contact the local mayor's office about signing a proclamation officially launching National
- Children's Dental Health Month in February.
- Develop a list of media contacts and prepare press releases about dental health issues and local events.
- Follow up on arrangements for displays, health fairs and school presentations.

December

- Distribute press releases about dental health issues and special events and activities.

Sample press releases available online

January

- Make final confirmations with speakers, facilities and your tooth fairy (Students studying acting often are willing to get a costume together and help you with this). Distribute posters to schools, clinics, libraries, etc.

February

- Follow up press releases with phone calls inviting local newspaper, radio and TV reporters to cover your dental health events.

March

- Distribute thank-you letters and certificates of appreciation (see the activity sheets in the back of the program planning guide for reproducible certificates of appreciation). Prepare a summary report of activities, expenses and any other meaningful data for future campaigns.

Ideas for Easy-to-Do Activities

1. Sponsor a coloring contest. This planning guide contains coloring and activity sheets that may be duplicated for a contest. Contact administrators of local childcare centers and elementary schools to encourage school participation. In the past, some dental societies have offered contest winners a savings bond, gift certificate or tickets to sporting events, concerts or the movies.

2. Sponsor a dental health poster contest. Select a poster slogan and choose a grade level to target. Determine where to display the posters, who will judge them and what you'll provide as the award. You may wish to use the NCDHM theme: "GET A GOLD MEDAL SMILE." Contact local schools and prepare and distribute poster guidelines. Consider reproducing the winning poster art on a free bookmark made available at libraries.

3. Sponsor a dental health essay contest. Essay contests encourage originality and are challenging for older children. To conduct a school contest, contact the school nurse, health or physical education instructor or the school administrator. Invite children or teens to write a persuasive essay on a dental topic, such as diet and soft drinks, or cleaning teeth, etc. Encourage children to visit ADA.org to research their topic. Define contest rules (such as age/grade, number of words or paragraphs, deadline, prizes, and where to submit the entry). Take a photo of the winner(s) and, with their permission, send it to local papers with an announcement.

4. Offer school presentations. A classroom visit is the cornerstone of many NCDHM programs. Choose your target audience: preschool, elementary or high school. Contact the school nurse, health or physical education instructor or the school administrator to make arrangements. You may wish to solicit corporate donations of toothbrushes, toothpaste or dental floss. For presentation ideas, see: ADA.org/ncdhm

5. Sponsor a display or exhibit at the local library or museum. Dental societies often display NCDHM posters, simple dental messages, photos of children receiving oral health exams, dental equipment, dental care products and models or charts of the mouth in educational displays. Contact the library or museum administrator several months in advance.

6. Create an oral health bulletin board. A simple bulletin board with brochures, tips, health messages and a list of resources or referrals is a simple way to promote oral health at schools, libraries, clinics and community centers.

7. Conduct a dental health screening. Schools, clinics, churches and community centers are good places to hold dental health screenings. Once the details are confirmed (who, what, when and where), announce the screening in a press release to local newspapers, radio and television stations. Provide children with oral health “report cards” that they can take home.

8. Participate in a health fair. Your local mall, community centers, hospitals, schools, park districts, clinics and banks are good locations for small health fairs. Approach a local business, hospital or clinic to co-sponsor a community health fair. Dental health exhibits can feature posters, mouth models, literature and hands-on demonstrations. Show a dental health video for children. Offer a toothbrush trade-in or provide visits with the tooth fairy or local dental society mascot if you have one.

9. Give a talk at a community center. Some shopping malls and banks have space set aside for community use. Contact the management office to make arrangements and to publicize the presentation. Talks can be geared to children or adults. Some groups use DVDs or videotapes, hand puppets, tooth costumes and mouth models for presentations. Distribute brochures or activity sheets that promote children's oral health. This Program Planning Guide contains activity sheets that can be duplicated and used as hand-outs.

10. Work with community and civic groups. Offer presentations about children's oral health to local groups like the Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions' Clubs, women's clubs, and local businesses (supermarkets, pharmacies, etc.).

11. Reach out to youth groups with dental career information. The Scouts, YMCA, 4-H, Future Farmers of America, and other groups have young members who can distribute dental health materials, benefit from programs and screenings, and assist in various phases of implementing your NCDHM activities. Information on dental career resources may be found in this kit. Also check the ADA's web site ADA.org

12. Reach out to parents. Reach parents by speaking at childbirth classes and parent-teacher organization meetings. Provide new parents with dental health packets (literature, bib and gauze) for newborns. Distribute pamphlets and posters to obstetricians and pediatricians for use in reception areas. This is a good way to reach parents and enlist support from other health-care professionals.

13. Work with the local chapter of the American Cancer Society. Conduct tobacco cessation presentations; create a display for high school students. Contact the American Cancer Society (ACS) at 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit the ACS web site for more information or to find a local ACS chapter.

14. Ask dentists and pediatricians to promote NCDHM. NCDHM messages on recall notices, statements and answering machines are just a few of the ways that health professionals can give oral health pointers to patients. Ask them to hang up NCDHM posters in their waiting and exam rooms.

15. Contact hospitals, public service organizations and businesses. These organizations may use oral health messages, announcements and events in their newsletters, bulletin boards, web

sites, electronic signs or mailings.

16. . Get in the news. NCDHM Programs can send out press releases to local newspapers, radio and television stations. Contact the local PTA or PTO and offer to submit an article about children's dental health for their newsletter. Do this before and after events. If you have photos of health fairs, school presentations, screenings, sealant applications, etc., you can send them with a press release or a simple note to the editor for additional coverage. Visit the NCDHM website for sample press releases and articles.

Publicity

There are many ways to publicize your oral health messages, events and activities. Here are ideas that will help you get your messages placed:

Develop a list of the local newspapers, radio and television stations. Many libraries have media directories (such as Bacon's), which include addresses, phone numbers, names of editors or producers, and circulation or broadcast information.

The local phone directory is a good resource for locating news outlets. Don't forget community news or "free" papers, which often feature community events.

Press releases are bulletins that provide general information about a specific topic (sealants, mouth guards, early childhood caries, etc.) or an upcoming event, such as a dental health screening. The enclosed sample press releases can be tailored to your group's needs. News articles should be typed, double-spaced on organization letterhead or sent by email.

Good outlets for news releases include:

daily and weekly newspapers and Sunday newspaper supplements

newsprint shopping guides

hospital newsletters

library bulletin boards

health club newsletters

church bulletins

chamber of commerce newsletters

Visit the NCDHM website at ADA.org/ncdhm for sample press releases and articles.

ADA Catalog Resources

The ADA sells a wide variety of educational materials, including pamphlets, posters, teaching packets and audiovisuals. Discounts are available for large orders.

To purchase materials, call 800.947.4746. Also visit ADAcatalog.org for product information.