

November 5, 2020

Robert R. Redfield, M.D.
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30329

Re: Expedite Guidance for School-based Dental Programs

Dear Dr. Redfield:

On behalf of our 163,000 members, we respectfully urge the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to quickly provide guidance on the safe manner to resume conduct of school-based dental programs across the country.

As you know, schools play a key role in providing dental care for underserved children. We share the concern of many state dental directors as well as the many dental professionals who participate in these programs that not only are preventive services such as sealants not being provided, children with dental emergencies are not being identified and referred for necessary care.

Oral health, as you are aware, is critical for overall health, particularly for children. There have been estimates that children miss over 51 million hours of school due to untreated dental disease that can impact their overall health and scholastic achievement.

February is National Children's Dental Health Month and many regions are planning school-based events in the hopes that CDC guidance will assist in the safety of those events.

The ADA Program, Give Kids A Smile (GKAS), will soon be utilizing over 1,500 brand ambassadors across the country to participate in the planning of access to care events for underserved children, a large majority of which are school-based events focused on oral health. Each year through GKAS, approximately 350,000 underserved children are provided free oral health services, including education, screenings, fluoride varnish applications, dental sealants, cleanings, fillings, extractions and pulpotomies. Guidance from the CDC well in advance could reassure parents and the school-based community stakeholders that every precaution would be taken for safe oral health events.

Thank you for considering our request. We applaud your leadership and commitment to oral health as this public health crisis continues to impact our nation. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Robert J. Burns at 202-789-5176 or burnsr@ada.org.

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Sincerely,

Daniel J. Klemmedson, D.D.S, M.D.
President

Kathleen T. O'Loughlin, D.M.D., M.P.H.
Executive Director

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