

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P. O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

March 21, 2019

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: CHILDREN'S DIVISION AND CONTRACTED STAFF

FROM: DAVID KURT, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: DENTAL EXAMS FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise staff the Child Welfare Manual has been updated with regard to dental exams for children in out-of-home care. The policy for when a child must first see a dentist for an oral examination, as well as subsequent dental exams, has been clarified and is now aligned with the dental periodicity schedule established by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD). The adoption of the AAPD periodicity schedule also brings Missouri in compliance with the federal Child & Family Services Review well-being outcome measure around children receiving appropriate services to meet their dental health needs.

Dental Screenings versus Dental Exams

All children receive dental **screenings** as part of the comprehensive assessment/HCY (Healthy Children & Youth) exam, (commonly known as a "well-child check") completed at certain age intervals known as the HCY periodicity schedule. As part of the HCY screening, the primary care professional, or other appropriately trained professional, performs an oral health screening of the child's mouth and teeth to identify oral disease or other oral conditions (delayed tooth eruption, premature tooth loss, trauma) and provides guidance for management. This screening is not a full dental exam. Primary care professionals identifying problematic oral health during the dental screening portion of an HCY exam will refer the child to a dentist for a dental exam, also known as a clinical oral examination.

Dental **exams** are performed by dentists or qualified dental professionals. During a dental exam, the dentist or hygienist will check for cavities and gum disease and may

clean the child's teeth. The exam involves a more comprehensive oral health evaluation and may include dental X-rays or other diagnostic procedures, when indicated. Oral hygiene habits and anticipatory guidance are typical points of discussion during each visit.

Dental Exam Periodicity Schedule – When and How Often Exams Should Occur

First Dental Exam: The AAPD recommends the first dental examination occur at the time of the child's **first tooth eruption**, or no later than 12 months of age.

A child's developing primary teeth (or "baby teeth") are susceptible to decay as soon as they appear. This first visit provides the early opportunity to check existing teeth for decay and to assess any potential problems with the child's gums, bite, oral tissues, and jaw. The dentist can provide guidance on baby bottle tooth decay, infant feeding practice, teething, pacifier habits, finger-sucking habits, and mouth cleaning.

Ongoing Dental Exams: Dental exams are recommended **every six (6) months**, or more frequently if recommended by the dentist based on the child's risk status.

Child's First Dental Exam Following Entry in to Out-of-Home Care

All children entering out-of-home care must have a full, comprehensive HCY assessment within 30 days. Included in this physical health and developmental assessment are vision, hearing, and dental screenings. The dental screening may be completed by the physician performing the physical exam, or the child can be taken to a dentist to receive this screening. A full dental examination is not required during this 30-day timeframe solely due to the child's entry into out-of-home care. However, if during the HCY dental screening the provider indicates a need for a full dental/oral examination, the physician will make a referral and staff shall ensure this exam occurs. This dental exam must be performed by a dentist or qualifying dental professional.

Because dental exams are recommended every six (6) months, staff should promptly collect the child's dental records upon entry in to out-of-home care to ascertain when the child last had a dental exam and when he/she should visit the dentist next. These records can be obtained from the child's dental provider, or by accessing the information via CyberAccess for MO HealthNet recipients. If the child has no history of a dental exam, the child's first dental exam should be scheduled based on the anticipatory guidance given by the physician during the 30-day HCY assessment, but no later than six months from entering CD custody.

NECESSARY ACTION

1. Review this memorandum with all Children's Division staff.
2. Review revised Child Welfare Manual chapters as indicated below.
3. All questions should be cleared through normal supervisory channels and directed to:

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| PDS CONTACT Lori Masek 573-592-1007 Lori.Masek@dss.mo.gov | MANAGER CONTACT Ivy Doxley 573-526-1422 Ivy.Doxley@dss.mo.gov |
| CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS Section 4 Chapter 24 Subsection 4.1 Routine Medical / Dental Care | |
| FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS N/A | |
| REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES N/A | |
| RELATED STATUTE N/A | |