

STATE OF COLORADO

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Dedicated to protecting and improving the health and environment of the people of Colorado

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Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

School-Based or School-Linked Oral Health Programs Considerations for School Districts

Many Colorado school districts are contacted by various public, private, and non-profit organizations offering oral health services. The following are guidelines for school districts to consider when entering into an agreement with these organizations.

Oral Health Program Services: Preventive services (exam/assessment, x-rays, prophylaxis, oral hygiene education, fluoride varnish/fluoride treatment, sealants) and restorative services (fillings) are customary. *

(* Note: there is no scientific literature demonstrating the efficacy of prophylaxis for young children. While this certainly provides the child with a positive dental experience, programs should either offer fluoride varnish or fluoride treatments, and sealants for second and/or sixth grades, to be effective in reducing dental decay.)

Qualifications of the staff providing the oral health services: Dentists and dental hygienists may practice independently in Colorado and are licensed by the state. It's not unreasonable to request to see the license. Dental assistants are not licensed but must be under the DIRECT supervision of a dentist (Dentist must be physically present in the room or on the mobile unit.) Dental hygiene assistants and dental hygiene students may provide services under the DIRECT supervision of a dental hygienist (dental hygienist must be physically present in the room).

Each person practicing should provide services within their specific scope of practice and not provide services above those in which they are allowed legally to provide.

Schools and school districts may also request that individuals providing services to students provide proof of liability insurance and background checks to protect the interest of students and providers.

Modes of Service: Mobile vans usually have greater capabilities for the full range of preventive and restorative services. However, portable equipment is used in most sealant programs.

School/Oral Health Coordination: The organization should contact the School District Administrator in charge of health services first to learn about district requirements. If given the approval to go ahead with the program, the organization may be referred to a school nurse or other school official to coordinate the logistics.

Written Agreement: There should be a written agreement between the organization and the School District, which is reviewed and renewed annually. The agreement should state the dates the organization will be in the district, names of schools, and grades that will receive the services.

Safety Precautions: The organization should be in compliance with OSHA (Occupational and Safety Health Administration) rules and regulations regarding infection control. Recommended infection control practices are applicable to all types of dental practices and settings where treatment is provided.

Quality Assurance Plan: The organization should have a quality assurance plan. The plan could include items such as examining the sealants placed the previous year in a random sample of students, protocols for referrals, standards of care, etc.

Parental Consent: Signed parent consent is mandatory and should be printed in English and Spanish. Parents should receive a note from the dental provider outlining what services their child received and referral information if necessary at the end of the program.

School Personnel: It is not required for school personnel or school nurses to be with the students at all times but the organization will coordinate with teachers, paras, or school nurses the logistics of the services. School personnel should be welcomed by the provider staff and allowed to observe, if desired.

Reports: Upon completion at a school district, the provider organization should be required to submit a written report to school district administration. This report should include: # of consent forms distributed; # signed consent forms received; insurance breakdown; # of students who received services; services provided; and number of molars receiving sealants.

Should a school or district have any questions, please contact the Colorado Department of Health and Environment - Oral Health Program at (303) 692-2470.