

Res. 00-09

RESOLUTION ON CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTH

WHEREAS, nationally, tooth decay is the most prevalent preventable chronic disease in children, with 78% percent of those under age 18 experiencing dental caries, according to the Surgeon General's May 2000 Report on Oral Health in America; and

WHEREAS, oral health is an integral and essential component of overall health which enhances children's readiness to learn and future success in employment; and

WHEREAS, social, behavioral, cultural, geographic, environmental and economic factors contribute to most oral health problems; and

WHEREAS, fewer than one in five Medicaid-eligible children receive dental services and low-income children suffer more tooth decay and go without treatment for almost fifty percent of their tooth decay; and

WHEREAS, children from low income & minority families have poorer oral health outcomes, fewer dental visits and fewer protective sealants; and Latino preschoolers experience 2.5 times more tooth decay than white children and African-American children experience 1.5 times more tooth decay than white children; and

WHEREAS, it is the Healthy People 2010 objectives to reduce the proportion of children and adolescents who have cavities in the primary or permanent teeth; increase the proportion of low-income children and adolescents who received any preventive dental services during the past year; and increase the number of local health departments that have established culturally appropriate and linguistically competent community health programs to address oral health.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) will continue to promote preventive activities such as water fluoridation, dental sealants, and smoking prevention and cessation programs, especially for those communities most in need; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NACCHO continues to support initiatives, public and private, at the federal, state, and local levels to increase surveillance and access to dental services and education about oral health issues and prevention opportunities to underserved communities; and continue to encourage state and federal funders to use all opportunities to reduce disparities in the oral health status of children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NACCHO will work towards developing greater system capacity to care for populations in need through supporting programs that provide incentives to practice in underserved areas, such as the National Health Service Corps, and encouraging a more equitable distribution of dentists and other oral health practitioners throughout the country, both geographically and in the areas of specialty practiced; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NACCHO will support LPHAs' efforts to increase utilization of services by Medicaid-eligible children, will advocate that states begin to or continue to extend benefits to children through the State Children's Health Insurance Plan (SCHIP) or other state plan options, and encourage dentists to participate in the programs by offering incentives such as increased reimbursement and by confronting other inefficiencies in the system that deter their participation.

Adopted by NACCHO Board of Directors

November 12, 2000

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REFERENCES

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