

Free dental services coming to area schools

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

February is National Children's Dental Health Month, and a great time to remind parents that free dental services are coming to area schools in late February.

The Northeast Colorado Health Department has partnered with the Centennial Area Health Education Center to help provide free dental services to local school children. The Eastern Plains Oral Health Initiative is a school-based oral health education and prevention program involving local school districts, local public health agencies, local registered dental hygienists, Centennial AHEC and other contributing agencies, whose goal is to improve the oral health of uninsured and underinsured children 3-8 years of age.

In promoting this mission, NCHD began working with the Centennial AHEC in 2008 under a grant provided by the Caring for Colorado Foundation to help coordinate dental screenings for children in Phillips and Sedgwick counties. Since that time, the grant has helped to provide more than 900 screenings and fluoride treatments for the children in these two counties.

While some of the schools in Phillips and Sedgwick counties have already received services this year, there is an additional screening and fluoride treatment day scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 28 for Julesburg's pre-K students and at Holyoke Elementary School.

There will also be future clinics for these two counties scheduled in March or April to do the sealants. The only thing required to receive these free services is a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian. Slips are mailed to parents but can also be obtained from the child's school.

The program includes free oral screenings, fluoride varnish application and sealants for students with permanent teeth (first- and second-graders). All of the children receive education on how to care for their teeth, but only children whose parents return permission forms can receive the fluoride and varnish and/or sealants.

The services offer a savings of \$31 or more on fluoride and a savings of \$38 or more per tooth for the sealants. The screenings and services are provided free of charge in school during the regular school day, so no special transportation is needed.

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“Although the goal of this program focuses on uninsured and underinsured children, these screenings and services are available for every child attending preschool through the second grade” said Michelle Pemberton, NCHD’s preventive health services coordinator. “Even if your child sees or has seen a dentist, the fluoride protection typically lasts three to six months, so it’s a good idea to take advantage of the free service while it’s available.”

Pemberton went on to say that all of the services offered are painless and do not require drilling. Children will probably not even be able to tell that anything was done to their teeth, except for having a different taste in their mouth.

For more information concerning the dental screenings or the Eastern Plains Oral Health Initiative, contact Kandice Kramer at 970-522-3741 ext. 1247 or e-mail kandicek@nchd.org.

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