

DENTAL HYGIENE PROGRAM OUTLINE

WELLSBORO AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL YEARS: 2024-2025, 2025-2026

Dental Hygienist: Nicola Kress RAH / PHDHP

Dentist: D. J. G. [Signature]

Superintendent: \_\_\_\_\_

## DENTAL OUTLINE

Oral disease is a common, preventable disease that affects many school-aged children. School children often suffer dental pain that can be prevented; these children often have difficulty concentrating during school hours and often display more absenteeism because of their dental condition. If left untreated, this preventable disease and the pain it causes can result in failure to thrive as well as low self-esteem. The psychological impact that certain dental conditions have is severe for these children.

The dental experience should be a positive experience for children throughout their lives. The interaction that children have with dental providers will impact them for the rest of their lives. Often, these children have experienced and/or observed severe dental pain from family members and are often frightened by the dental environment. The goal of this program is to provide a positive and educational experience and teach the children the importance of early intervention and disease prevention.

### PROBLEMS:

\*There are no pediatric dentists in Tioga County.

\*Several children qualify for the free or reduced-fee lunch program.

\*Several children may have Medical Access, MA (Medicaid) for payment for their health and dental treatment. Most dental offices in Tioga County are either: 1) at full capacity for the patients who are enrolled in the MA program, or 2) these patients do not have any other form of payment for dental services, or 3) do not accept MA for payment for dental services.

\*Tioga County has a very high unemployment rate, and many residents fall at or below the poverty level.

\*There is a lack of dental knowledge for many parents of these school children and few, if any, awareness programs exist for them.

\*Many parents of these children fail to get regular dental checkups themselves which often results in tooth loss and pain requiring costly procedures with the oral surgeon or require emergency room services due to the severity of the dental condition.

There is a high rate of tobacco (cigarette) use as well as a high rate of smokeless tobacco use at early ages throughout Tioga County. The schools are in rural areas of Tioga County and it is a barrier for some parents to go to dental providers due to financial barriers as well as unreliable transportation sources; these offices may be located several miles away from their homes.

## **GOALS:**

- \*To implement a dental hygiene program that focuses on disease prevention and education.**
- \*To increase awareness of dental preventive measures used in dentistry such as fluoride, dental sealants, mouth guards and healthy eating and drinking habits. Special emphasis will be placed on "soda" and energy drinks.**
- \*To inform parents of the oral condition of each child's mouth.**
- \*To increase the number of students who can effectively and correctly remove plaque from his/her teeth.**
- \*To provide a referral program to ensure the maximum numbers of children are treated for their dental preventive needs.**
- \*To refer children to family or pediatric dentists for necessary care. Also, assist in arranging appointments.**
- \*Evaluate children who have been referred to ensure that parents have taken them for treatment.**

## **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1. Reduce dental disease.**
- 2. Create an awareness of dental health.**
- 3. Create an awareness of the foods, drinks and snacks that cause dental disease.**
- 4. Create an awareness of the sugar contained in many of the foods and drinks being consumed.**
- 5. Provide dental health assessments (screenings) for grades K, 3 and 7.**
- 6. Gather data and provide necessary documentation from the dental screenings to parents and school.**
- 7. Provide a positive dental experience for the children.**
- 8. Identify children who may benefit from preventive dental sealants.**
- 9. Provide a dental resource list of dental providers in Tioga County and the surrounding area and the form of payment these providers may accept.**
- 10. Provide a list of dental specialists that will include pediatric dentistry, orthodontic services and dental surgery.**
- 11. Discuss foods, drinks and snacks that may be beneficial to teeth as well as the ones that may be harmful. Sugar and acid content will be targeted.**
- 12. Identify children who may be suffering from dental pain and may be neglected.**

## **METHODS:**

All students in grades K, 3 and 7 will be assessed for dental problems. Visual screenings will be performed and discussion will take place with each student to target specific needs. Records will be kept and referrals will be made for dental care.

Students will be screened and given a grade of pass (no treatment needed), referral or immediate referral.

Any student in any grade identified with physical limitations that may limit a child's ability to effectively keep his/her teeth clean will be addressed and screened.

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**METHODS OF EVALUATION:**

- 1. Children will be screened in an open, noninvasive manner and will display cooperation and involvement in learning how to improve his/her dental condition. Each child will sit in a chair that reclines and be assessed. The children wear sunglasses and hold the hand mirror to visually see the health of the gingiva or the redness from the plaque if present. If healthy mouths without gingival irritation and without an abundance of plaque are assessed, the children will be commended. Areas will be pointed out if there is an accumulation of plaque followed by personal instructions on better tooth and gingival care.**
- 2. Children will discuss and learn about various topics and be asked questions pertaining to his/her habits. The focus will be on stressing the number of times per day that tooth brushing should be done, the length of time each tooth brushing should take and questions about diet will be discussed.**
- 3. Children will become more aware of the harmful things that affect their teeth and overall health. Beverages will be displayed, and the amount of sugar will be displayed so the children can visually become aware of the excessive amount of sugar in drinks. Emphasis will be placed on soda, energy drinks and Kool-Aid drinks. Juice will also be displayed, and emphasis placed on the sugar and acid content in these drinks. Healthy drinks such as water and milk will be displayed and discussed with the recommendation being that these two are very healthy deinks for the body and the teeth.**
- 4. Children will become more aware of the harmful effects of tobacco and be able to state two harmful effects. Pictures will be displayed showing the effects of tobacco on the teeth.**
- 5. Children will have a better understanding of dental prevention and the on-going benefits of fluoride and regular dental visits by discussing fluoride-containing products and the frequency of use needed to keep his/her teeth cavity free. Sources of fluoride will be pointed out to the children and emphasis placed on the application of topical fluoride each time he/she brushes. Fluoride tablets and fluoride rinses will be discussed, and both can be done at home under parental supervision.**
- 6. A movie will be watched if time allows called "Geena's Tooth Adventure". This short movie provides information on the eruption of new or permanent teeth and the loss of primary teeth. Snacks are discussed and the characters visit the dentist and show a step-by-step process of a dental visit to the dentist for a preventive dental appointment.**
- 7. Children will be referred through a paper that is sent home to parents. If an abundance of plaque was seen during the dental screening, a note will be added to the report recommending longer, better and supervised brushings. If the child has an active infection or states that he/she is in pain, an immediate referral will be made. Follow up will be made with the school nurse to ensure that parents have taken the child if an immediate referred to a dentist was recommended.**