

Dear Local Public Health Agencies,

May 2020

The Preventive Services Program (PSP)* provided through the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) and the Office of Dental Health (ODH) is a free community-based oral health program offered to all Missouri children in their school setting. PSP provides an oral health screening once a year and a fluoride varnish application twice a year, which are both considered low risk aerosol procedures. The only possible aerosols produced are from talking, coughing or sneezing. DHSS and ODH are staying informed as the situation of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to evolve. We continue to monitor guidelines from the American Dental Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on best practices to continue the PSP with dental screenings and applications of fluoride varnish in a school setting. PSP may look a little different going forward but can continue with a few extra precautions in place.

According to the American Dental Association, dental caries is the most common chronic disease in children in the United States.

Data facts from the PSP 2018-2019 school year:

- Of the children screened in Missouri, 21% were found to have untreated decay
- Of the children with untreated decay, 19% were found to be in **urgent** need of dental care

The numbers above represent a large amount of children who may not otherwise see an oral health professional. Oral health is essential to children's overall health and well-being. When left unchecked, smaller cavities can develop into larger cavities that can cause pain and may inhibit a child's ability to learn. We look forward to continuing our PSP partnerships with school districts, Head Start Agencies, WIC Programs, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), etc. The PSP may have a "new normal" in response to COVID-19 but will continue to meet the oral health needs of your community's children by utilizing local dentists, hygienists, and volunteers with this important program.

To learn more about the PSP or other questions regarding this information, please contact the Oral Health Program at OralHealth@health.mo.gov or 573-751-5874, or to locate your Oral Health Program Consultant, visit this web link; <https://psp.health.mo.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2019/08/locate-oral-health-consultant.pdf>

***The Preventive Services Program Methodology**

Four Components of PSP

1. Surveillance/Screening

Dentists or dental hygienists conduct an annual oral screening. This visual exam detects obvious decay and problems that need intervention. Screening data are compiled for surveillance and program planning.

2. Education

The program provides basic oral hygiene instruction and education on fluoride varnish benefits. Toothpaste, a toothbrush and floss are also provided.

3. Prevention (Fluoride Varnish)

Trained volunteers apply two applications per year.

4. Referral

The program provides the names of community dentists who can help provide treatment for unmet dental needs. Parents review the list when they are notified of significant findings in their children's oral screenings.