

Dear Superintendents,

I hope this email finds you well.

I would first like to commend you on navigating through these tough times. Your leadership and dedication to your community, staff, students and parents has not gone unnoticed. We thank you for your long and exhausting hours committed to providing the best possible situation for all.

I would also like to take this time to thank you for your past commitment to the School Oral Health Program (SOHP), coordinated by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention and Medical Care Development, Inc. More than ever, we are eager to provide oral health prevention services to the students in your school districts. We can safely do these procedures without creating aerosols.

During the pandemic, many families have faced hardships, including losing jobs and medical/dental insurances. Additionally, the majority of Maine dental practices were shut down for nearly 3 months, and many children had to postpone needed care. Even today, dental offices are turning at lower capacity because of COVID-19 precautions, meaning that children's preventative dental visits are still being postponed. We don't foresee this situation changing through this school year.

The Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has provided a statement in support of providing oral health services during the pandemic, as well as a resource the national AAP created on this issue. Nicole Breton (Director of Maine CDC Office of Rural Health, Oral Health and Primary Care), Emily Poland (Department of Education's School Nurse Consultant), Maine Association of School Nurses and I; have all met to find a safe and seamless way to provide SOHP services to Maine schools in the upcoming school year. We have the blessing of the Maine DOE and our field hygienists are deemed essential workers, just like vaccine coordinators or social workers. The Maine Association of School Nurses have released this statement: "Due to the limited availability of routine, preventative dental services in the communities, MASN supports the inclusion of school-based oral health services if provided in a safe environment following recommended infection control protocols outlined by the Maine DOE and the Maine Oral Health Program. The school nurse should discuss these protocols with any private oral health contractors that provide services in the school building."

The SOHP is prepared with an abundance of PPE and we have had CDC and OSHA COVID-19 training. We will, as always, work closely with school

nurses and schedule our presence at the schools convenience. Please remember, dental decay in children continues to be the most common childhood disease. Over 51 million hours of school time is lost annually due to dental disease. Maine is working towards reducing the rate of dental decay among Maine's school children. Unfortunately, with the current lack of preventive care available for children, we expect to find these numbers will be higher than years prior. As such, we are sincerely hoping you will continue to allow us to provide oral health services to the children in your schools. Without our services, thousands of children will go without dental care completely.

If you are interested in participating, please return the enclosed Statement of Expectations at your earliest convenience and we will send out more information in the next few weeks to your school nurses.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me: Sherry Laliberte, School Oral Health Program Coordinator at slaliberte@mcd.org.