



March 3, 2020

The Honorable Phil Serna -Chair  
Board of Supervisors – Sacramento County  
700 H Street  
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Early Smiles School Screening and Navigation Program

Dear Chairman Serna:

The Center for Oral Health developed the Early Smiles program in 2016 to provide services such as oral health examinations, oral hygiene instruction, topical applications of fluoride, and navigating kids to a dentist. We targeted Title One Sacramento school districts for the purpose of reaching the most vulnerable kids and making sure they are not in pain. In just three years we've expanded and in 2019 our team provided onsite visits to 130 schools encountering 26,765 students.

As you may know, our program was initiated by the three dental managed care plans who have continuously funded the program along with Sacramento First Five and the Dental Transformation Initiative (DTI)---the program would not exist without this support. (Important to note that the DTI Domain 4 funding is finished at the end of this year 2020.) Funding last year totaled approximately \$930,000 and funding required for 2020 is approximately \$915,000 to meet program objectives---we are well on our way.

The Early Smiles program has caught to say the least. Over the past three months, our team has received numerous requests from 230 schools with an additional 25,000 to 40,000 students in need of our services. Our team is working overtime to meet up with the demand with our limited resources. Despite our best efforts to visit as many of the students as possible, we are under budget and will not be able to achieve the same number of encounters without additional financial support---particularly from the dental plans. We have requested that support and expect the plans to provide the funding.

However, the funding and consequently the program it appears, will end in 2020 (perhaps as soon as June) as a result of the Governor's budget elimination proposal of the Sacramento GMC Dental Managed Care Program.

We know that without support from Sacramento County, the Early Smiles school program will end and not just for the lack of funding. What makes the Early Smiles program work is that it provides much more than just screenings because of the follow up provided by the dental plans.

Early Smiles is administered by licensed dental hygienists who screen each student, assign them with an assessment level and provide detailed notes on what follow up each child needs. In all other screening programs, the program stops there and the follow up for every single student falls on the school nurses. This entails calling every parent/guardian, in majority of cases multiple times, just to have the initial conversation about what dental care their child needs. (In Sacramento County, our school nurses have 4000 students to 1 nurse, which is more than five times the national recommendation of 750 students to 1 nurse.) In the Early Smiles Sacramento program, the parents sign an active consent & gives permission for the Early Smiles navigation specialists to work with the dental plans to determine the membership for each student who was screened. From there, the specialists send each plan all for the information for the students who are their members. The dental plans' teams then make up to five calls to help assess what barriers to care they have faced, help schedule appointments (within 24 hours for any child in pain) and assists with scheduling transportation and interpretation services, if needed.

It is not reality to expect that the Early Smiles Program can function under a Fee For Service Denti-Cal program that puts the responsibility on the school nurses & the individual beneficiaries.

The Center for Oral Health is therefore respectfully requesting that Sacramento County take a position opposing the budget elimination proposal for the purpose of maintaining the Early Smiles Screening & Navigation school program, as well as for the many administrative benefits that Medi-Cal beneficiaries of Sacramento County have come to rely upon for approximately 25 years in the managed care program. Thank you for your consideration Chairman Serna.

Respectfully,



Kevin E Scott  
CEO

CC: Dr. Kasirya  
Julie Gallelo – First Five of Sacramento