

Dental Screening

California law requires children to have a dental screening by May 31 of his or her first school year. Dental evaluations that have happened within the 12 months before a child enters school also meet this requirement.

Your child's school will provide forms to take with you to the dental screening.

If you cannot get a dental check-up for your child, you can apply for your child to be excused from the requirement by filling out the bottom portion of the form. Mark the reasons your child could not get the check-up.

You can obtain additional copies of the necessary forms at your child's school.

What should I do when I receive the notice of this new oral health requirement from my child's school?

If you have a dentist, and your child has not received an exam within the last 12 months, call and schedule an appointment for an examination. If your child has seen the dentist within the last year, call your dentist's office and ask how they are handling this requirement. Also ask what you must do for the dentist to complete the required form based on your child's last regular exam. They may ask you to mail or fax the required form to them. They may also tell you they have extra copies and will complete it and send it to you.

My child does not have any form of dental insurance and I don't think I can afford a dental exam for my child. What should I do?

Many children who are not covered by a commercial insurance plan may be eligible for health benefits through the Medi-Cal program or the

Healthy Families program. Both Medi-Cal and Healthy Families automatically include dental care.

To find out if your child can enroll in Medi-Cal (Denti-Cal), contact your local social service agency. You can find that number by visiting: www.dhs.ca.gov/mcs/medi-Calhome/CountyListing1.htm. Your school may also be able to refer you to a local resource to help you enroll your child in the Medi-Cal (Denti-Cal) program.

If your child does not qualify for Medi-Cal, he or she may qualify for Healthy Families, which is another government program that covers dental care. To find out if your child can enroll in Healthy Families, call them at 1-800-880-5305 or visit their Web site at www.healthyfamilies.ca.gov/hfhome.asp.

I am just not able to get a dental check-up for my child. What should I do?

The law recognizes that under some circumstances, it may not be possible to get the required dental check-up for your child. In this case, you may have your child excused from the requirement by filling out the bottom portion of the form you received from the school.

To have your child excused, this portion of the form asks you to identify what prevented you from getting the dental check-up for your child. This information is very important, because it will help community leaders and policy makers decide what next steps must be taken to improve access to oral health care for children. Mark the box that most closely describes the reason you could not get a dental check-up for your child. Return the form to your child's school by May 31 of the school year.