FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT: [INSERT LOHP CONTACT NAME]

 [TITLE]

 [COUNTY OFFICE]

 (XXX) XXX-XXXX

**Dental Check-Ups Help Reduce Childhood Tooth Decay and Missed School Days.**

*[INSERT COUNTY NAME] Launches Back-Tooth-School Activities to Remind Parents and Caregivers of*

*The Importance of Children’s Oral Health.*

**[INSERT CITY] (July XX, 2021)** – Healthy teeth not only help children eat, speak and sleep better; they also help them to perform better in school. Studies show children who have poor oral health often miss more school and receive lower grades than children who do not.[[1]](#footnote-2) To ensure students keep a healthy smile this coming school year, [INSERT LOHP NAME] encourages parents and caregivers to make scheduling a dental check-up for their children a priority.

Cavities, which are largely preventable, remain the most common chronic childhood disease. In [INSERT REGION], more than [INSERT NUMBER] percent of students have experienced tooth decay by third grade.[[2]](#footnote-3) To help address the issue, [LOHP NAME] is [INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF LOCAL BACK-TOOTH-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES]. These activities are in support of a larger statewide effort implemented by *Smile, California*, the Medi-Cal Dental Program’s campaign to help Medi-Cal members make use of their dental benefit, and the California Department of Public Health’s Office of Oral Health.

“Visiting the dentist before school starts should be at the top of every family’s back-to-school checklist along with school physicals, vaccinations and school supplies,” said [INSERT NAME, TITLE]. “Regular dental check-ups not only allow the dentist consistent opportunities to provide prevention treatments, such as sealants and fluoride treatments, but the regularity also allows a child to begin to feel more comfortable at each visit, increasing the chances of them continuing regular dental check-ups as adolescents and adults.”

California requires that all children have a comprehensive oral check-up by the time they are ready to enter public school. The “Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment” aims to help schools identify children suffering from untreated dental disease and helps parents and caregivers establish a dental home for their children. This will ensure early detection and preventive services to help children mitigate pain, difficulty eating or speaking, and school absences.

“Regular check-ups give dentists the consistent opportunity to identify and treat tooth decay, apply protective treatments like sealants and fluoride varnish, and, most importantly, discover problems that could cause pain and potentially even harm a child’s self-confidence and overall school performance, if left untreated,” said Alani Jackson, Chief of the Medi-Cal Dental Services Division within the California Department of Health Care Services. “Medi-Cal Dental is here to help. We provide free or low-cost check-ups every six months for members under the age of 21 and molar sealants up to the same age.”

To find a Medi-Cal dental home near you or to download *Back-Tooth-School* resources including informational flyers, videos, fact sheets, presentations and social media images, visit the [Oral Health and School Readiness page](https://smilecalifornia.org/School-Readiness) at SmileCalifornia.org and SonrieCalifornia.org.

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1. Griffin SO, Wei L, Gooch BF, Weno K, Espinoza L. Vital Signs: Dental Sealant Use and Untreated Tooth Decay Among U.S. School-Aged Children. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2016;65:1141-1145 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. California Office of Oral Health. 2018-2020 Third Grade Basic Screening Survey. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)