

Policy on the Role of Pediatric Dentists as Both Primary and Specialty Care Providers

Originating Council
Council on Clinical Affairs

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Purpose

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) emphasizes that health care providers and other interested third parties must recognize the dual role that pediatric dentists play in the provision of professional oral health care, which includes both primary and specialty care services.

Methods

This statement was based on a review of the accreditation standards for advanced specialty training programs in pediatric dentistry and the AAPD position paper on the role of pediatric dentists as primary and specialty care providers.^{1,2}

Background

"Pediatric dentistry is an age-related specialty that provides both primary and comprehensive preventive and therapeutic oral health needs for infants and children through adolescence, including those with special health care needs."¹ The American Dental Association, the American Academy of General Dentistry, and the AAPD all recognize the pediatric dentist as both a primary care provider and specialty care provider. This dual role is similar to that of pediatricians, gynecologists, and internists in medicine. Within that profession, clinicians and third-party payors envision these physicians in a dual role and have designed payment plans to accommodate this situation.

The AAPD respects the rights of employers to negotiate health care benefits for their employees. Unfortunately, third-party payors sometimes do not recognize pediatric dentists as primary care providers and restrict access to pediatric dentists for children who have reached a certain age.

Policy statement

The AAPD encourages appropriate, quality oral health care for infants, children, and adolescents. When pediatric oral health care is deemed necessary, either by a responsible adult or referring clinician, the AAPD encourages third parties to recognize pediatric dentists as both primary and specialty oral health care providers and to refrain from age-related restrictions for care by pediatric dentists.

References

1. American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation. Accreditation standards for advanced specialty education programs in pediatric dentistry. Chicago, Ill; 2000.
2. American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry Council on Dental Benefits Programs. Position paper: The role of pediatric dentists as primary and specialty care providers. Chicago, Ill; 2002.

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