



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 30, 2005

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Champaign-Urbana Public Health District

Public Health District's Dental Clinic Provides Dental Exams to Head Start Kids

About 60 Children to Receive Required Exams in Early December

This month the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District's Dental Clinic is working to meet the local need for dental exams in toddlers and kindergarten children. On December 1 and December 5, Dr. Trina Blunt will provide dental exams to nearly 60 children enrolled in the Champaign County Head Start program. Dr. Blunt is Acting Director of the Health District's Division of Dental Health.

Dental needs of children – particularly those in low-income families – often go unmet during school years – neglect that may result in major health problems later in life. A study of access to oral health care for Illinois low-income children in 2000 showed only 33 percent of children enrolled in Medicaid or the State Children's Health Insurance Program received oral health care during the year. The study also found that only one-third of active general and pediatric dentists were enrolled as Medicaid providers.

Early this year, Governor Rod Blagojevich signed a law that calls for mandatory dental screenings for public and private school students in kindergarten, second and sixth grades. Public Health is working to meet the need for these exams in children who have not yet had them.

Studies of the dental health of Illinois schoolchildren have found that more than half of students surveyed have evidence of tooth decay. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, poor children have nearly 12 times more restricted-activity days due to dental problems than children from higher-income families. Pain and suffering due to untreated tooth decay can lead to problems in eating, speaking, and attending to learning. Dental exams early in a child's life can reveal tooth decay before it develops into a major health problem.

The Health District's Dental Clinic serves children aged 3 to 18 who are residents of Champaign or Urbana. Call (217) 531-4279 to schedule an appointment.