



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

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### **Iowa Children Don't See Dentist Early Enough**

*Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation Kicks Off Statewide Public Service Campaign*

**JOHNSTON, Iowa (February 7, 2011)** – Children in Iowa don't see their family dentist on average until they are 3 years old,<sup>1</sup> when in fact it's recommended that a child should go to the dentist by age 1 or within six months after the first tooth erupts.<sup>2</sup>

In honor of National Children's Dental Health Month in February, the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation is kicking off "Dentist by 1," a statewide public service campaign to educate parents about the benefits of taking their children to the dentist by age 1 and to encourage them to schedule a visit.

"Tooth decay is nearly 100 percent preventable. So it's important to begin good oral health habits, like visiting the dentist, at a young age," said Dr. Ed Schooley, Dental Director for Delta Dental of Iowa and Foundation Vice Chair. "Also, studies show that early preventive dental care like check-ups and cleanings can save in future dental treatment costs."

"Delta Dental's goal with the 'Dentist by 1' campaign is for more children to see a dentist by age 1, which will help improve the oral health of Iowa's youngest residents," said Donn Hutchins, president and CEO of Delta Dental of Iowa and Foundation president. "Data from Delta Dental shows that despite having dental benefits, on average Iowa children with dental coverage are not having their first dental exam until after age 3."

#### **What to Expect at Your Child's First Visit**

"During the first visit, the dentist will examine your child's teeth for early signs of decay, but will also look for problems with the baby's head, neck, jaws, skin and soft tissues in and around the mouth like the tongue, cheeks and lips," said Coralville dentist, Dr. Polly Iben, president of the Iowa Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. "Your child's bite, facial growth and development will also be assessed." In addition, the dentist will:

- Demonstrate various tooth brushing and flossing techniques and positions to help parents care for their baby's teeth properly
- Discuss diet and feeding/snacking practices that may put the child at risk for decay
- Discuss the use of topical fluoride
- Provide anticipatory guidance for trauma prevention

At home, oral health care should begin at birth. Caregivers should gently wipe the baby's gums with a soft, wet cloth after each feeding. When primary teeth begin to appear, they should be cleaned with a soft, child-sized toothbrush twice a day. Toothpaste can be introduced once the child is 2 years old and able to spit. All tooth brushing on babies and toddlers should be performed by the parent.

As part of the campaign, the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation is offering a free infant toothbrush\* for children up to age 3 who have visited the dentist. Parents can complete a form at [www.OralHealthIA.com](http://www.OralHealthIA.com) to receive a toothbrush and be entered into a monthly drawing for a kids' Sonicare® toothbrush.

Delta Dental will also provide educational materials to Iowa hospitals, clinics, pediatricians and OB-GYN offices. The Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation's "Dentist by 1" campaign is supported by the Iowa Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, the Iowa Dental Association, the Iowa Department of Public Health, and University of Iowa College of Dentistry.

Visit [www.OralHealthIA.com](http://www.OralHealthIA.com) to view a special section dedicated to the importance of visiting the dentist by age 1 and for more tips on establishing good oral health habits for a lifetime of healthy smiles.

*Delta Dental of Iowa is the largest and most experienced provider of dental benefits in the state. As a not-for-profit, Delta Dental of Iowa invests in oral health projects through the Delta Dental of Iowa Foundation that focus on access to care, prevention, education and research. Delta Dental of Iowa is a member of the Delta Dental Plans Association, a national organization of not-for-profit Delta Dental member companies. The national association is the largest dental benefits carrier in the nation providing coverage to 54 million people in more than 93,600 employer groups.*

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<sup>1</sup>Delta Dental of Iowa 2010 Claims Data.

<sup>2</sup>American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Dental Association.

\* Infant toothbrushes will be given to the first 10,000 people who complete the form on the Delta Dental of Iowa website at [www.OralHealthIA.com](http://www.OralHealthIA.com).