



AMERICAN
ACADEMY OF
DEVELOPMENTAL
MEDICINE &
DENTISTRY

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Policy Statement Committee on Public Policy and Advocacy // November 2020

SUBJECT: Response to the World Health Organization on Routine and Preventive Dental Care

At the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the World Health Organization released a directive advising patients to delay routine and preventive dental care. On August 3, 2020, they released the interim guidance to update their original recommendation entitled “Considerations of the Provision of essential oral health services in the context of COVID-19. Again, the WHO advised that routine non-urgent oral health care including oral health check ups, dental cleanings and preventive care be delayed until there has been sufficient reduction in COVID-19 transmission rates from community transmission to cluster cases or according to official recommendations at national, sub-national or local level.”

The American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry is the World’s leading interdisciplinary organization advocating for healthcare for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Comprised of clinicians, academicians, and allied health professionals, it has evolved as the voice for this most medically and dentally underserved population. Its mission is to improve the quality outcomes and value of healthcare for people with IDD. The AADMD also advocates for, creates policy, and ensures that the IDD population is not marginalized, compromised, nor discriminated against in any issues related to their health and well being.

People with IDD have long suffered substantial systemic barriers accessing health care. The result has been disproportionately higher rates of chronic disease, morbidity, and mortality.

It is with this purpose that the AADMD respectfully requests that the WHO re-evaluate their recommendation to delay routine and preventive oral healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic and consider at risk populations such

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as children and adults with IDD. Dental care is the most unmet healthcare need for this population who have numerous barriers to care. It is the position of the AADMD that advising against routine and preventive dental care will exacerbate already existing problems, especially among vulnerable populations. Oral health is a fundamental component of overall health, and conditions within the mouth can be indicative of systemic disease. Conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and gastrointestinal disorders are directly related to the oral cavity. Individuals with IDD are disproportionately affected by these comorbidities, therefore deferring routine dental care can have devastating outcomes. Patient safety is our highest priority. With the amplified precautions that dental offices have adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic, routine and preventive dental care can continue to be provided safely in order to prevent secondary oral and systemic complications.

The AADMD officially requests the WHO rescind its statement recommending that routine and preventive dental care be delayed during the COVID-19 pandemic and recognize that appropriate clinical care can significantly improve the quality of life for patients with IDD.