

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Dentists an Important Ally Against Child Abuse

Delta Dental applauds dentists who participate in the P.A.N.D.A. program.

Stevens Point, Wis., April 11, 2014 – Cleaner teeth and better oral health are the obvious benefits of children making regular dental visits. But when some kids sit in the dentist's chair, a more troubling problem than cavities may come to light: physical abuse.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, and Delta Dental member companies are proud to support their local P.A.N.D.A. programs. The focus of the P.A.N.D.A. (Prevent Abuse and Neglect through Dental Awareness) program is to train dentists to recognize and report suspected cases of abuse or neglect in their young patients. A study in the mid-1990s found that dentists were responsible for identifying less than one percent of all reported suspected child abuse cases.¹ So Delta Dental of Missouri partnered with the Missouri Bureau of Dental Health to found the first P.A.N.D.A coalition, and the program has since grown to include 46 states including Wisconsin and seven countries.

“When properly trained to spot signs of child abuse, dentists can be an important ally in identifying potential neglect and preventing further abuse,” said Dr. Fred Eichmiller, DDS, Delta Dental of Wisconsin's vice president and science officer.

More than 124,000 children were reported as being physically abused in 2012.² Studies have indicated that dentists are five times as likely to report suspected abuse if they receive proper training in this area.³ All states have laws requiring health professionals, including dentists, to report concerns of child abuse and neglect to appropriate authorities.

Injuries to the head, face, and neck account for an estimated 65 percent of injuries in physically abused children,⁴ so a check-up gives dentists a unique opportunity to uncover potential signs of abuse. Signs can include (but are not limited to) unexplained cuts, welts or bruises, and unusual alertness or anxiety. Dentists and dental staff members who suspect child abuse or neglect can file a report through your Wisconsin County Department of Health & Human Services and Social Services.

Delta Dental of Wisconsin provides dental professionals with awareness and detection training at Marquette University School of Dentistry, technical colleges, conferences, and other professional gatherings. For more information about the P.A.N.D.A. program or to schedule training, please contact Delta Dental of Wisconsin's professional relations department at (800) 836-0490.

About Delta Dental of Wisconsin

Delta Dental of Wisconsin is a not-for-profit dental service corporation offering benefit services, claims processing, and plan administration to employers throughout Wisconsin since 1962. The company is headquartered in Stevens Point, with sales offices in Milwaukee and Madison, and provides benefits and services to more than 1.5 million subscribers and their family members. Delta Dental administers dental benefits for more Wisconsin companies than any other insurance carrier.

As a member of the nationwide Delta Dental Plans Association, the company is able to offer employees of Wisconsin-based companies the same dental benefits to wherever they are located in the United States. The Delta Dental Plans Association is the largest dental-benefits system in the nation. Its member companies provide benefits to more than 51 million people in 93,600 groups across the United States.

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¹ *Putting Teeth in Public Health*. Dr. Lynn Mouden. <http://sph.unc.edu/putting-teeth-in-in-public-health/>

² *Child Maltreatment 2012*. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families; Children's Bureau. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2012.pdf>

³ Kassebaum DK, Dove SB, Cottone JA. Recognition and reporting of child abuse: a survey of dentists. *Gen Dent* 1991; 39:159-62.

⁴ *National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. Chapter 3: Diseases and Disorders*. <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/datastatistics/surgeongeneral/sgf/chap3.htm>