



Public Health



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'Little Teeth, Big Responsibility' Campaign Urges Parents to Prioritize Oral Health for Very Young Children

First 5 San Bernardino and Smile SBC kick off National Children's Dental Health Month with dental screening event for preschool students in Ontario

SAN BERNARDINO, CA (January 30, 2025) – Tooth decay is [the most common chronic childhood disease](#) in the United States. To help young children and their families, [First 5 San Bernardino](#) and the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health's local oral health program [Smile SBC](#) are joining forces to promote healthy pediatric oral care during National Children's Dental Health Month in February.

"[Little Teeth, Big Responsibility](#)" urges parents of young children to start good dental care habits early because healthy baby teeth form healthy adult teeth. This means establishing daily brushing routines, avoiding sugary drinks and taking baby to the dentist by their first birthday or first tooth. Free or low-cost dentists can be found by visiting Smile SBC's "[Find a Dentist](#)" webpage.

"It's easy to overlook the importance of our child's baby teeth, and let's face it, getting your toddler to brush their teeth can be a struggle all of us can relate to," said First 5 San Bernardino Executive Director Karen Scott. "This is why we team up with Smile SBC every year to help families and children make dental care a priority even before your baby has teeth!"

Ontario-Montclair School District Superintendent Dr. James Q. Hammond shared, "As educators, we recognize that a child's success extends beyond the classroom. By fostering partnerships that emphasize early dental care and healthy habits, we are investing in their overall well-being and lifelong learning."

First 5 San Bernardino kicked off their campaign with a special event at Hawthorne Elementary School in Ontario, Calif. Forty-eight preschool children received free dental

screenings with brushing and flossing tips, a surprise visit by the Potter the Otter mascot, a reading of *"Potter the Otter Visits the Dentist,"* dental giveaways and more.

"Today's event with these preschool children showed just how critical it is to start good oral health habits as early as possible," said Bonnie Flippin, program coordinator at San Bernardino County Department of Public Health's local oral health program Smile SBC. "We want to empower these kids to take brushing and flossing into their own hands, and we hope that by sprinkling in a little bit of fun like what we did today, will help them do just that."

According to a survey by the Center for Oral Health and Smile SBC, over 60% of kindergarteners in San Bernardino County are affected by tooth decay, but it can be prevented. By prioritizing brushing, flossing, healthy eating and regular dental visits, parents not only protect their child's immediate health but also lay the foundation for lifelong, positive oral health habits.

In addition to finding a dentist, information about medical insurance enrollment and transportation assistance are also available on Smile SBC's ["Find a Dentist"](#) webpage. For more information on protecting your child's oral health and for other helpful resources, visit First5SanBernardino.org/OralHealth.

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About First 5 San Bernardino

First 5 San Bernardino's distinct purpose is to improve the lives of young children and their families by giving them the best possible start in life. For 25 years, First 5 San Bernardino has been working dynamically through strategic partnerships to promote, support and enhance the health and early development of children prenatal through age 5, their families and communities. Funded through the 1998 voter-approved initiative, California Children and Families Act (Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues), First 5 San Bernardino has evolved into a system where stakeholders and services are integrated, coordinated and sustainable, and one that families experience as accessible, inclusive and equitable. For more information, visit First5SanBernardino.org.

About Smile SBC

The San Bernardino County Department of Public Health's Smile SBC program, established in January 2018, aims to work in alignment with and towards achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the California State Oral Health Plan 2018-2028. Smile SBC and local oral health programs like it across the state are funded by the California Department of Public Health, Office of Oral Health through funds generated as a result of passage of the California Healthcare, Research and Prevention Tobacco Tax Act of 2016 (Proposition 56). Smile SBC is tasked with improving oral health, especially of vulnerable and high-risk populations, through assessment, planning, health promotion and education, population-level disease control and



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prevention and capacity building. The program also focuses on coordinating countywide efforts and building partnerships to ensure county residents have equal opportunities and resources to achieve and maintain optimal oral health. For more information, visit SmileSBC.org.