



# Texas Health Steps for Preventing Oral Health Diseases in Children

## Action for Provider

Prevention education and early detection of oral health problems are pivotal to preventing diseases. Oral health assessment is a mandatory component of the Texas Health Steps (THSteps) exam for Medicaid eligible members from birth through 20 years of age. **THSteps policy requires referral to a dentist at six months of age and every six months thereafter until a dental home has been established and until patient is being seen regularly for dental care.**

As a provider of services for children on Medicaid, you can contribute by following the Texas Health Steps [Periodicity Schedule](#)<sup>3</sup> to incorporate all necessary components, including assisting patients with accessing dental health care and dental care coverage, making successful dental referrals, and educating patients on the importance of daily dental hygiene.

## Learn More

Reference the [BCBSTX Preventive Care Guidelines \(PCGs\)](#), [Clinical Practice Guidelines \(CPGs\)](#) and [THSteps for Medical Providers](#) to ensure you are providing the best care.

## Oral Health Facts

- Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease in the United States. Untreated cavities can cause pain and infections that may lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing, and learning.
- About 1 of 5 children ages 5 to 11 years old and 1 of 7 adolescents ages 12 to 19 years old had at least one untreated decayed tooth.<sup>2</sup>
- Over 67% of Texas 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have experienced tooth decay.<sup>1</sup>
- Children ages 5 to 19 years from low-income families are twice as likely to have cavities, compared with children from higher-income households.<sup>2</sup> This disparity may be related to issues of access to care, payment, and lifestyle behaviors.

### References:

<sup>1</sup> Texas Department of State Health Services. (2019, Oct 24). *Smiles in Schools*. Retrieved from: <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/dental/School-based-clinics.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019, May 14). *Children's Oral Health*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/basics/childrens-oral-health/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> Texas Health and Human Services. (2018). *Texas Health Steps medical checkup periodicity schedule for infants, children and adolescents*. Retrieved Nov. 1, 2019, from <https://hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/doing-business-with-hhs/provider-portal/health-services-providers/thsteps/th-med-checkup-periodicity-sched.pdf>