



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Nearly one in four Illinois kids miss school due to dental problems**

*Delta Dental of Illinois offers tips to help prevent oral health-related school absences*

**NAPERVILLE, Ill. (August 5, 2015)** – This school year, Delta Dental of Illinois wants to help Illinois parents reduce the amount of classroom time their children miss due to dental-related issues. A new Delta Dental of Illinois survey<sup>1</sup> finds that 23 percent of Illinois children ages 6 to 12 missed school due to an oral health problem last year.

According to the survey, 13 percent of Illinois parents reported their children missed a half day of school and 10 percent said their children missed one day or more last year. Nationally, more than 51 million school hours are lost each year by students whose dental-related issues cause them to stay home or seek care.<sup>2</sup>

In cases where pain is not intense enough to keep children out of school, oral health issues can still distract them in the classroom, causing kids to fall behind in coursework. "Untreated dental problems can be painful and embarrassing and can cause children to have a difficult time participating or concentrating in school," said Katina Spadoni, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. "When a child has serious tooth decay, it can affect overall health and can lead to problems eating, speaking and learning."

Dental checkups are one way to help prevent oral health-related school absences. A visit to the dentist can help with the early detection and treatment of dental disease and promote the importance of a healthy mouth for school readiness and learning. In Illinois, children in kindergarten, second and sixth grade are required to have one.

"A dental visit to check for current or looming oral health problems should be part of every child's

back-to-school routine,” said Spadoni. “Despite great advances in oral health care, tooth decay is one of the most common childhood diseases, with more than half of children ages 5 to 9 having had at least one cavity or filling.”

Along with taking children to the dentist, Delta Dental of Illinois offers these quick tips to help parents get their kids’ oral health on the right track this school year:

- Brush all surfaces of the teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day.
- Brush teeth gently for about two minutes and pay special attention to the gum line.
- Floss teeth at least once a day.
- Pack a healthy lunch. Limit not only sugary snacks, but also high-starch or refined carbohydrate foods. These foods include chips, pretzels, cookies, white bread and dried fruits, including raisins. Pack milk or water instead of juice to help wash down lunch. The bacteria that cause tooth decay thrive on simple sugars, especially those in sticky foods and drinks.

For more tips on taking care of children’s oral health, visit [YourOralHealthHub.com](http://YourOralHealthHub.com).

### ***About Delta Dental of Illinois***

*Delta Dental of Illinois (DDIL) is a not-for-profit dental service corporation that provides dental benefit programs to individuals and more than 5,000 employee groups throughout Illinois. DDIL covers 2 million individuals, employees and family members nationwide. DDIL is based in Naperville, Illinois and offers single-site administration and client services.*

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<sup>1</sup>Kelton, a leading global insights firm, conducted the 2015 Delta Dental of Illinois Children’s Oral Health Survey. Interviews were conducted statewide via email with 231 parents of children ages 12 and under. For results based on the total sample of Illinois adults, the margin of error is  $\pm 6.5$  percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.

<sup>2</sup>US Department of Health and Human Services. *Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General-- Executive Summary*. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institutes of Health, 2000.