



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

Delta Dental of Illinois  
111 Shuman Boulevard  
Naperville, Illinois 60563  
www.deltadentalil.com

**Contact:**  
Liz Jans  
The Meyocks Group  
515-238-4304  
lizjans@meyocks.com

### **Back-to-school dental checkups help keep kids focused in classroom**

**NAPERVILLE, Ill. (July 30, 2012)** – After purchasing school supplies, picking out new fall clothes and scheduling immunizations, Illinois parents might think their back-to-school checklists are complete. But Delta Dental of Illinois wants to remind parents they may be forgetting an important item: their child’s dental checkup.

“A dental checkup should be part of every child’s back-to-school routine,” said Katina Morelli, DDS, dental director for Delta Dental of Illinois. “Despite great advances, 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.”

In Illinois, all children in kindergarten, second or sixth grade are required to have a dental checkup. Dental checkups help with the early detection and treatment of dental disease and promote the importance of a healthy mouth for school readiness and learning.

Each year, more than 51 million school hours are lost by students whose dental-related illnesses cause them to stay home or seek care. In cases where pain is not intense enough to keep children out of school, it can still distract them in the classroom.

"Poor oral health is a very real distraction and can cause some children to have a difficult time participating or concentrating in school," said Morelli. "When a child has serious tooth decay, it can affect overall health and can lead to problems eating, speaking and learning."

The good news is that tooth decay is nearly 100 percent preventable, but can develop any time after teeth appear in the mouth. “So it’s important to begin good oral health habits, like visiting the dentist, beginning when children are very young,” said Morelli. “That’s why we recommend that a child’s first visit to the dentist is within six months of getting the first tooth – and no later than the first birthday.”

#### **Pledge to help local children through ‘Dentist By 1’**

The Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation launched the “Dentist By 1” public service campaign earlier this year to educate parents about the benefits of taking their children to the dentist by age 1.

As part of the campaign, Illinois parents and caregivers can help local, underprivileged children. For each person who pledges to take their child to the dentist by age 1, or to regular dental visits for older children, at [www.DentistBy1.com](http://www.DentistBy1.com), the Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation will donate an oral health kit, with a toothbrush, toothpaste and floss, to a local children's charitable organization. Parents who pledge will also receive a kit. Pledges can be made until Oct. 31, 2012.

For more information about the importance of visiting the dentist by age 1 and tips on establishing good oral health habits for a lifetime of healthy smiles, visit [www.DentistBy1.com](http://www.DentistBy1.com) or "like" Delta Dental of Illinois on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/DeltaDentalIL](http://www.facebook.com/DeltaDentalIL).

***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 in these groups nationwide. DDIL is based in Naperville, Illinois and offers single-site administration and client services.*

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