

School Dental Screening Requirement Frequently Asked Questions

1) When is the requirement effective?

The requirement is effective for the 2008-2009 school year.

2) Who does the requirement include?

The requirement applies to students newly enrolling in elementary school or high school. This would include Kindergarten (or 1st grade if there is no Kindergarten), 9th grade, and out-of-state transfer students.

3) Does the requirement include children who are home-schooled?

No. The requirement only applies to students newly enrolling in an Iowa public or accredited nonpublic school.

4) What is the timeline for a screening to be done?

For elementary school, a screening that is done between the ages 3 to 6 is acceptable. For high school and transfer students, a screening completed within one year prior to enrollment is acceptable.

5) Who can provide a screening?

The goal is that every child will have an exam or screening by a dentist. However, due to barriers in accessing care, this may not be possible for all families. For elementary students, the requirement allows that a dentist, dental hygienist, physician, physician assistant, or nurse may provide a screening. For high school students, a screening must be provided by a dentist or dental hygienist.

6) What if a student does not have a dentist or has difficulty obtaining a screening certificate?

No child without proof of a dental screening will be prevented from attending school. If families have difficulty meeting the requirement, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and local public health agencies will provide assistance to ensure that the necessary dental screening is obtained. Twenty-four local public health dental hygienists serving as I-Smile Coordinators are available to assist children and schools. Free or reduced-cost screenings may be available through community health programs or health screening events.

7) Will training be available for physicians, physician assistants, or nurses to do the screenings?

For the purpose of quality assurance and consistency, IDPH will make training and training materials available for dental screening providers. We anticipate that trainings will be provided by I-Smile Coordinators or by state Oral Health Bureau staff at state or regional meetings (e.g., ICN sessions, school or health care provider conferences).

8) Will dental cards from the past be acceptable?

No. The new Certificate of Dental Screening or a form approved in writing by IDPH must be used. However, during this first year, IDPH will take into consideration that children may have already had a dental screening before the certificate was available.

9) How will the screenings be reported to IDPH?

The statute requires an audit report be sent to IDPH from each local board of health by June 30th for the preceding school year. IDPH will work with the boards of health, I-Smile Coordinators, and schools to complete the audit.

10) When do the students need to turn in the Certificate of Dental Screening to the school?

The rules do not specify a certain amount of time. To assure ample time to comply with the audit requirement, IDPH recommends that the certificates be collected at schools as soon as possible.

For more information, please contact:

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