



An exciting partnership to make oral health care accessible to the young children of our region

Early Childhood Dental Network



Because oral health is an important part of overall health

The Early Childhood Dental Network is coordinated by West Central Initiative and made possible thanks to our sponsors. Learn more at ecdn.wcif.org.



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What's the issue?

- **Childhood tooth decay** is the most chronic, yet preventable, infectious disease in children.
- Dental problems are five times more prevalent than asthma and seven times more than hay fever.
- 50 percent of tooth decay in low income children goes untreated.

What is the ECDN?

The Early Childhood Dental Network (ECDN) is a nine-county, multi-disciplinary collaborative project, and an outgrowth of the Early Childhood Initiative of west central Minnesota. It is designed to increase awareness and education to all children and their caregivers about the importance of oral health, and to increase access to dental care, specifically to the 0-5 population on Minnesota Health Care Programs or the uninsured.

There's strength in numbers

The ECDN's greatest strength lies in the partnerships it has developed. Through these collaborations, the ECDN:

- Bridges gaps in services;
- Works on the strengths of each partner agency;
- Builds the capacity of current providers;
- Makes a difference in the oral health of our communities. The ECDN believes that having access to appropriate dental care should be a basic human right.

ECDN's goals

There are two primary goals of the Early Childhood Dental Network:

- To increase access to timely, appropriate and affordable dental care with a focus on children ages 0-5;
- To increase oral health awareness and education to children, parents and families to help them understand the importance of good oral health to one's overall health and wellbeing.

The ECDN is making a difference to the children in west central Minnesota by:

- Developing and implementing a variety of fun, educational oral health trainings and materials, such as "How to Talk 'Tooth' When You're Not a Tooth Professional," which has been shared with thousands of children, parents, teachers and caregivers to give them a better understanding of oral health care.
- Supporting mobile outreach clinics to help to increase the number of the region's children who receive dental care and who are served by Minnesota Health Care Programs.
- Working with Apple Tree Dental and Caring Hands Dentistry to expand community-based dentistry and Children's Dental Services to create and expand school-based oral healthcare for families with low incomes.
- Aiding medical clinics with implementing oral health screening during well-child exams.
- Continuing to look for new and innovative ways to help young children maintain good oral health.