



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Importance of Dental Care in children: Keeping Their Mouths Happy and Healthy

February is National Children's Dental Health month. Keeping children's teeth healthy and preventing oral disease is an important part of their overall health. Oral diseases, including cavities, are nearly 100 percent preventable, yet they are extremely common, affecting children all across Minnesota every day. February is National Children's Dental Health Month.

"Fortunately there are many ways to help prevent oral diseases and many of them start with things you can do in your own home", says Stacy Patnode, Public Health Nurse with Crow Wing County Community Services and the Child and Teen Check-up Outreach program.

- Children should brush their teeth or if too young to brush effectively themselves, have their teeth brushed for them, at least twice a day.
- Ensure that your child is using toothpaste that contains fluoride, if they are old enough to rinse and spit. Also consider fluoride rinses, especially if your water is not treated with fluoride (most homes within city limits have treated water).
- Have children floss at least once a day. This is an important habit for children to start at an early age, especially once their teeth start to touch together.
- Provide your child with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and offer less sugar sweetened beverages and foods to help prevent tooth decay, gum disease and cancer.

"In addition to keeping teeth healthy while at home, bringing your child in to see a dentist at least once a year starting at 12 months of age is extremely important in preventing tooth decay and identifying dental diseases. The earlier these problems are caught, usually the less painful and expensive they are to treat" says Patnode. "Dentists are also able to place dental sealants on children's permanent molar teeth to prevent future cavities."

"Finding dental care can sometimes be a challenge for some families, especially those who have financial concerns or who are on medical assistance. Fortunately we have dental providers that host special events each year in our community that allows these families to have access to dental care services", says Patnode.

Please check the website www.ChildandTeenCheckups.com for a list of dentist in Crow Wing County that accept Medical Assistance.

Community Services expends more than \$163 million dollars annually, of which 4.66%, \$7.6 million is funded by the county levy. In 2015, total program costs were \$163,133,479 with Medical Assistance programs being the highest spending area at \$110 million, or 67.5% of the total program costs. Social Service programs represent the second largest portion of the total at \$41.4 million, or 25.4%. Cash assistance programs were 6.3% of the total at \$10.2 million. While this is a large portion of the county budget we have seen a significant decrease. For example, from 2009 to our proposed 2017 budget, we have reduced tax levy dollars by \$1,209,306, a decrease of 14.3%.

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Our Mission: Serve well. Deliver value. Drive results.
Our Values: Be responsible. Treat people right. Build a better future.