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NEW DENTAL PROGRAM COMES TO LEE

Parents can request free care through schools



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Fort Myers, Fla. – Children in Lee County are eligible to receive limited free dental care beginning this month with the start of the Florida Department of Health in Lee County's new School Based Dental Sealant Program. Preschool and elementary age children from Child Care Southwest Florida and the Quality Life Center were the first to sign up for services.

"The goal is to achieve optimal oral health by finding a dental home for local families," said Maria Garcia, DOH-Lee dental hygienist. "Everyone's health is affected by their oral health. Dental offices provide the regular guidance for a person's mouth that primary care offices provide for the rest of the body."

The local program is part of a state-wide initiative called Sealing Sunny Smiles Across Florida. The American Dental Association says a sealant, which lasts several years, is about 20 percent of the cost of one tooth filling. Children with poor dental health are three times more likely to miss school due to oral health problems.

Participating children can receive a free assessment, sealant, fluoride varnish application and education. Parents are given dental hygiene education materials. Garcia is also working with Women Infants and Children clients at public health offices in North Fort Myers, Fort Myers and Lehigh Acres.

Schools, community organizations and groups interested in hosting the program can contact Garcia directly at 239-332-9648 or maria.garcia@flhealth.gov.

For information about the department go to <http://lee.floridahealth.gov/>

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