



Children's Oral Health Toolkit: Talking Points

The following are talking points to use as a guide when constructing communications or preparing for media interviews. These recommendations are based on FrameWorks' research on oral health.

Start with a Value:

As adults, we have a responsibility to guide the next generation toward healthy and prosperous futures. So, when something that is getting in the way of learning can be easily solved, it's important to do something about it. That's why everyone needs to join the effort to prevent childhood dental decay. (VALUES: PREVENTION, FUTURE)

Explain the issue:

As the U.S. Surgeon General pointed out in the nation's first-ever report on oral health, the mouth is an early-warning system, signaling trouble in other parts of the body. Put another way, if your mouth isn't healthy, neither is your body. (CONNECT ORAL HEALTH TO OVERALL HEALTH)

Currently, we have a "silent epidemic" in the health of our children: dental disease. Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease, five times more common than asthma, and it can deeply affect a child's overall health. Children with poor oral health have trouble eating, speaking and learning. Moreover, if dental disease is left untreated, it can lead to life-long health problems – from respiratory disease to heart disease to diabetes. (DEFINE PROBLEM AS A DISEASE; EXPLAIN THE CONSEQUENCES)

Then, introduce solutions:

The good news is that the majority of dental decay is preventable when children have access to protective measures, such as regular screenings and fluoride treatments.

One simple way to improve oral health is to offer services in the schools. Because so many of our communities lack practicing dentists, school-based services are particularly important in ensuring our children's health. When kids get services right way, they miss fewer days of school, and, when they are in school, they can pay attention in class and keep up with their peers. Today, some schools hold dental screenings and sealant clinics, but there is no formal program or policy in place that would ensure that all children receive this important preventive care. (EXAMPLE OF SOLUTIONS)

The health of children's teeth and mouths is as important as any other part of their bodies. It affects how they feel, learn and behave. The majority of dental disease is preventable, and with access to preventive services and regular oral health exams, we will have healthier, happier kids.