



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION
April 16, 2007
Contact: Peggy Yamagata (619) 692-8858

FREE DENTAL CLINIC TO HELP FAMILIES COMPLY WITH NEW LAW *Dental screening and fluoride varnish free to children without dental insurance*

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency's (HHSA) Dental Health Initiative/Share the Care Program, the North County Dental Task Force and Southwestern College Dental Hygiene Program are sponsoring a free dental clinic for children ages 1 to 18 on Saturday, April 21st from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. More than two hundred children are expected to participate in the event, being held at the new Operation Samahan Dental Clinic, 10737 Camino Ruiz, San Diego.

The clinic and health fair are being funded by County Supervisor Pam Slater-Price through District 3 Community Projects, to help children with no dental resources and assist with school readiness. The clinic will also help parents comply with a new California law that requires all children to have an oral evaluation by May 31st of their first year in public school. Volunteer dental professionals will provide oral evaluations, dental sealants and fluoride varnish for children's teeth.

"The County of San Diego's free dental clinics are vitally important to good health," said Third District Supervisor Slater-Price, who has funded numerous dental projects and services for families and children in need. "We offer these clinics to ensure our children have access to quality care to help improve their health and well-being. Preventive dental work now saves money in the long run."

Unfortunately, many children do not receive routine dental care and prevention services due to lack of finances. In fact, for every child without medical insurance in this country, it is estimated that there are nearly three without dental insurance.

Tooth decay is the most common infectious disease among children. Recently, a school age child in Maryland died from untreated tooth decay. "It is heart wrenching to think that children in this country are dying of a preventable disease," said Peggy Yamagata, R.D.H., M.Ed., with the County's Dental Health Initiative. "Our goal is to help prevent this from happening in San Diego." A dental sealant is a protective coating that covers deep grooves in the back teeth, and fluoride varnish is a coating that is incorporated in the enamel of teeth, making the tooth stronger and more resistant to decay.

For more information, please call the Dental Health Initiative/Share the Care Program at (619) 692-8858.

###