

Riverbend Head Start & Family Services Recognizes Children's Dental Health Month

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ALTON - The month of February is National Children's Dental Health Month. Riverbend Head Start & Family Services (RHSFS) is committed to educating and offering free dental services to the children and their parents who participate in our program(s).

The scope of this ongoing project is to provide oral health services to the more than 750 at-risk children under the age of five who live in Madison County, IL and attend one of our Head Start centers. We also provide oral health education for kids and their parents or caregivers.

The children in our program receive dental screenings, treatments, and surgeries thanks to our community partners like Delta Dental. RHSFS covers the cost of treatments and surgeries performed by Associated Pediatric Dentistry and Riverbend Pediatric Dentistry because our families cannot afford to pay for them. Our staff can also help transport the child and their parents or caregiver to dental appointments.

“Poor dental health can contribute to many other health issues if left untreated,” said Gene Howell, President and CEO. “We want our Head Start kids to be healthy and feeling their best, and oral health is a big part of that.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), by the time they reach 8-years-old, more than half of children (52%) has had a cavity in a primary (baby) tooth. Children from low-income families are more than twice as likely to have untreated cavities, compared with kids from higher-income households.

At the beginning of each school year, RHSFS staff will conduct home visits with our families using Delta Dental’s Brush Early Childhood Health Curriculum. Parents and caregivers are also asked to complete an oral health questionnaire. Our staff will help to educate parents about the importance and impact that oral health can have on a child’s overall health and ability to learn in school. Staff can also observe dental habits, and help create an action plan to prevent future oral health decay.

About Riverbend Head Start and Family Services

Riverbend Head Start & Family Services is a 501 (c)3 non-profit organization which began supporting the families and individuals of Madison County in 1916. Currently, we operate six centers, offering a two-generational approach that supports the growth of parents and children through our Head Start and Early Head Start programs. These programs serve more than 1,000 people annually.