



TENNESSEE'S EPSDT PROGRAM

Background and Explanation Sheet for Optional TennCare Caries Risk Assessment Questionnaire

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) issued a policy statement entitled: *“Oral Health Risk Assessment Timing and Establishment of the Dental Home”*. This policy recommends that every child receive a dental assessment by 6 months of age by a qualified pediatrician or pediatric health care professional (family practitioner, nurse practitioner, nurse, physician assistant, etc.) and those children identified as “high risk” for dental caries be referred to a dentist by age 1.
- AAP’s recommendation is based on the fact that dental caries is an infectious disease and evidence which reveals that cariogenic bacteria like streptococcus mutans and lactobacillus that are part of normal human dental flora, are transmitted vertically from mother to infant by intimate contact (sharing spoons, orally cleansing pacifiers) at the time the teeth begin erupting into the mouth from 6 months -2 ½ years of age).
- Children of mothers with high caries rates are at higher risk of developing decay.
- Since non-dental health care professionals are more likely to encounter new mothers and infants than are dentists, the burden of early oral risk assessment and referral lies with them.
- TennCare believes that its current “Periodicity Schedule” which requires referral to a dentist no later than age 3 (or earlier if there is a dental problem) is consistent with AAP’s recent recommendation.
- Attached is a *Caries Risk Assessment Questionnaire* developed by TennCare. The questionnaire is an optional resource tool developed to assist providers in determining which children may be at “high risk” for developing dental caries.