

State law requires student oral health exams by May 15

Oquawka – Poor oral health in school children has been linked to a number of negative outcomes, including lower grades, problems with peer relationships and decreased success in life. A study conducted by researchers at the University of North Carolina estimates that 51 million school hours are lost every year because of dental-related health problems.

With this in mind, Eagle View Community Health System reminds parents that Illinois law requires incoming kindergartners, 2nd and 6th graders to have a dental examination by May 15, or present proof that an exam is scheduled within the next 60 days.

“During 2nd and 6th grades, children’s back teeth, known as molars, usually appear,” explained Eagle View dentist Benjamin Cope, DDS. “The mandatory exam allows dentists to apply dental sealant to these new teeth to help prevent cavities.”

The law does allow exemptions for “undue burden” or lack of access to a dentist. Locally, Eagle View negates both of those exemptions by providing quality dental services with payment based on income. Eagle View also accepts Medicaid and all types of insurance.

Parents may schedule a dental exam by calling the Eagle View clinic in Oquawka at 309-867-2770 or the clinic in Stronghurst at 309-924-2424.

The exam must occur within the 18 months prior to the May 15 deadline. The Illinois Department of Public Health provides a Proof of School Dental Examination Form on its website at idph.state.il.us/HealthWellness/oralhlth/home.htm. The dentist can complete the form at the time of the exam.

The law, which went into effect July 1, 2005, allows schools to withhold the 2nd and 6th graders’ report cards if they fail to provide proof of examination or a waiver form by May 15. The law applies to all public, parochial and private school students.