



# NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Oral Health Makes a Difference in Phillips County**

Sterling, Colo. – October 27, 2022: Oral health is a public health issue, and the Northeast Colorado Health Department (NCHD) is working to improve the oral health of our children, especially those who are uninsured or underinsured by offering school-based oral health clinics and education.

Untreated tooth decay in children can cause pain, school absences, difficulty concentrating and poor appearance. All these problems can affect a child's quality of life and the ability to succeed.

NCHD has been implementing a school-based oral health program in Phillips County schools since 2008 and the Will Heginbotham Trust has provided matching funds to support this important program since 2013. With their support more than 800 screenings and 700 fluoride treatments have been provided to the children of Phillips County.

"The relationship between oral health and a person's overall health is often overlooked, but good oral health is an essential part of staying healthy," said Janell Gerk, NCHD's Health Promotion and Manager.

NCHD's school-based oral health program offers dental screenings and preventive services free of charge during the regular school day so no special transportation is needed. Services include age-appropriate oral health education for students and dental screenings, fluoride varnish and dental sealants on any erupted primary and secondary molars. The dental services offered provide a savings of \$31 or more on each fluoride application and a savings of \$38 or more per sealant that is applied.

The fluoride varnish is used to help protect teeth from cavities and is applied to a child's teeth using only a few drops with an applicator. The fluoride makes the outside of the teeth harder and helps to prevent decay. The dental sealants are thin plastic coatings that are painted on the top chewing surfaces of the molars, or back teeth. The sealants harden to form a protective shield over the tooth, also helping to prevent decay.

"Although the goal of this program focuses on uninsured and underinsured children, these dental services are available for every child attending Phillips County schools," said Gerk.

Parents of children attending Phillips County schools should see permission slips coming home later this fall. The only thing required to receive these free dental services is a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian.

For more information concerning the oral health program, please go to [www.nchd.org/oralhealth](http://www.nchd.org/oralhealth) or contact Janell Gerk at 970-522-3741 ext. 1255.

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