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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Hawaii Dental Service Addresses Poor Oral Health Among Hawaii's Keiki****“Dentist by One” Public Education Campaign Encourages
Dental Visits Before Children Turn One Year Old**

Hawaii's children continue to rank near the bottom of the nation when it comes to their oral health, according to surveys by the Pew Charitable Trusts. Hawaii Dental Service (HDS), the state's largest dental benefits provider, is trying to improve Hawaii's ranking by encouraging parents to take their children to a dentist before they are one year old.

HDS launched a “Dentist by One” educational campaign this month urging parents to take their children to see a dentist by their first birthday. It includes TV and radio public service announcements and educational brochures for new parents distributed by pediatricians.

The campaign's message is based on recommendations of the American Dental Association and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry that children's first dental visit should occur within six months after their first tooth appears, but no later than their first birthday.

Link to Permanent Teeth and a Child's Overall Health

“Parents may wonder why they should worry about their child's baby teeth since they will be replaced by permanent teeth, but tooth decay can occur as soon as a child's first tooth erupts,” said **Mark Yamakawa**, HDS president and CEO. “It's best for your child to see a dentist early because preventive care can save money and their teeth. It's just like a well-baby visit with a pediatrician.”

Strong, healthy primary teeth help a child chew and speak. They also hold space in the jaws for permanent teeth growing under the gums. Decay in primary teeth increases the risk of decay in the permanent teeth. Oral health ultimately can affect a child's overall health and well being

Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Tooth decay in infants and toddlers is often the result of “Baby Bottle Tooth Decay.” Babies should not be put to bed with a bottle. If your baby falls asleep with the bottle in his mouth, the liquid can pool around the teeth. This increases the risk for decay, especially if the liquids contain sugar and the teeth are exposed to this sugar for long periods of time.

Baby Bottle Tooth Decay most often occurs in the upper front teeth, but other teeth may also be affected. In some cases, infants and toddlers experience decay so severe that their teeth cannot be saved and need to be extracted.

A dentist can show you how to clean your child's teeth, discuss diet and fluoride needs and recommend oral care products. A dentist can also answer questions about your child's teeth.

Tips for a Positive Dental Visit

- Schedule your child's first visit between the arrival of the first tooth and his first birthday. If possible, schedule a morning appointment when children tend to be rested and cooperative.
- Never bribe your child to go to the dentist or use the visit as a punishment or threat.
- Try to make your child's dental visit an enjoyable outing. Teaching your child good oral hygiene habits early can lead to a lifetime of good dental health.

About Hawaii Dental Service

HDS is the largest dental benefits provider in the state, serving more than half a million members throughout Hawaii, Guam and Saipan. It has the largest network of dentists, with more than 95 percent of Hawaii's licensed, practicing dentists participating with HDS.

As a nonprofit founded in Hawaii more than 50 years ago, HDS is committed to making quality oral health care affordable and accessible. Employers who offer HDS dental plans to their employees represent Hawaii's diverse industries, companies, unions, associations, and nonprofit organizations. HDS also offers dental plans for individuals and families.

HDS has been a part of Delta Dental Plans Association (DDPA), the nation's largest and most experienced dental benefits company, since 1966. This affiliation gives members access to a nationwide network of participating dentists.

For more information, please visit www.HawaiiDentalService.com.