

COLLABORATIVE PEDIATRIC ORAL HEALTH CARE**T.F. Tonniges¹, E.H. Lockwood^{2,3}**¹*Community Pediatrics, ²Section on Pediatric Dentistry, American Academy of Pediatrics,*³*Pediatric Dentistry, Lockwood & Meeske Pediatric Dentistry, Elk Grove Village, USA**ttonniges@aap.org*

Children's oral health is an important, under-appreciated part of children's overall health and wellbeing. Dental care is the number one unmet health care need among children.(1) Children from low socioeconomic and minority populations and children with special health care needs (CSHCN) suffer disproportionately from untreated oral disease and its complications.(2,3,4,5,6,7,8). Recent reports and meetings, such as Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General (9), and The Face of the Child: Surgeon General's Workshop and Conference on Children and Oral Health,(10) documented profound and consequential disparities in children's oral health and access to care and called for a response from the larger health care community. Given their emphasis on health promotion, disease prevention, and early disease identification, pediatricians can play an important role in children's oral health outcomes. Pediatricians already are involved in important areas that overlap with oral health promotion, such as nutrition, injury prevention, fluoride dosing, tobacco use prevention/cessation, and care for children with special health care needs (this population has an increased risk of oral problems). Access to early oral health care is critical in preventing disease and identifying problems early. Pediatricians and others caring for children must collaborate with dental professionals and become more involved with oral health if these barriers are to be overcome (11). The broad framing of child health issues in a cultural, social, familial, and developmental context can contribute to new paradigms in addressing oral health disparities.

