



Dear Colleague:

We are writing to tell you about an exciting new oral health initiative in Rhode Island called *TeethFirst!* The focus of *TeethFirst!* is on promoting early dental visits and increasing oral health literacy among families, health care providers, and community organizations. It is a project of the Rhode Island Oral Health Commission (OHC), with Rhode Island KIDS COUNT serving as the lead agency and project manager.

The Rhode Island Dental Hygienists' Association is a proud partner and supporter of *TeethFirst!*, which is funded by the DentaQuest Foundation as part of its national Oral Health 2014 initiative. The goal of *TeethFirst!* is to increase the number of very young children in Rhode Island who have regular dental visits. *TeethFirst!* encourages parents to take their children for dental visits, to establish a clinical connection with a dental team, and to put them on the course of lifelong oral health. As you well know, dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants are integral to preventing dental disease and promoting oral health behaviors. The earlier a patient is seen in the dental office, the less likely it is that they will experience dental issues.

Please check out the website at www.TeethFirstRI.org (and in Spanish: www.PrimerLosDientes.org). This brand new website includes information and resources for:

- *Dental Providers* – Professional Development and Reimbursement Resources
- *Health Care Providers* – Professional Development and Referral Resources
- *Family Support Organizations* – Oral Health Information and Referral Resources
- *Parents* – Tips on How to Find a Dentist, What to Expect at a Dental Visit, and Home Care (coming soon)

We hope that you will join us in supporting this initiative in your own practice, by exploring the many resources on the website and raising the importance of early dental visits with your dental team members and patients. If your practice does not currently see young children, we hope that you and your team explore the possibility further through the *TeethFirst! Academy*, which is a new professional development opportunity for dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants that is offered *free of charge for the next year* in partnership with St. Joseph's Pediatric Dental Center.

New website content and resources will be added regularly. We are committed to sharing *TeethFirst!* updates and resources with you through RIDHA and OHC communications. We look forward to sharing more with you in the coming month as the initiative launches and becomes more well-known among providers and families. There will be free campaign materials available for you to share with your patients if you wish, as well as continuing education opportunities through the *TeethFirst! Academy* and links to online resources.

Together, we can encourage all Rhode Island children to have a dental home and improve their oral health. If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact us using the contact information provided below.

Thank you for all that you do to make sure that all Rhode Islanders have optimal oral health.

Sincerely,

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