

Managed DENTAL CARE

First Dental teams up with California regulator Will educate on insurance availability, discount plans

Noting that more than 15 million Californians lack dental coverage, San Diego-based network operator First Dental Health has joined forces with the Department of

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—Cindy Ehnes

Managed Health Care (DMHC) to emphasize oral health among children and communicate the advantages of properly licensed

discount plans. The DMHC is the state’s watchdog agency for managed care health and dental plans.

First Dental kicked off the initiative in December 2007 by providing free oral health assessments to students at a San Diego-area elementary school. Several more assessments are planned statewide this year. Educational materials will also be distributed via the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, the California School Nurses Organization, and the California State Parent-Teacher Association (PTA).

First Dental CEO **Michael S. Grossman, DDS**, notes that the impetus was a law in California enacted in 2007 that requires children to voluntarily undergo oral health exams prior to their enrollment in elementary school.

This has prompted the DMHC to want to more clearly communicate to Californians their options about obtaining dental coverage, he says.

“What the DMHC is looking for is a way to promote the licensing of discount plans,” Grossman says. He adds that a relationship First Dental has with PTAs across California to help market its discount product had piqued the DMHC’s interest.

According to Grossman, the DMHC has had a number of complaints about fraudulent discount plans. Unlike indemnity or managed care plans, discount plans charge a monthly fee to enrollees in lieu of receiving a discount from providers on cash-pay care.

“California is now licensing discount . . . dental plans so that parents have affordable, dependable options to get their families the healthcare they need,” says DMHC Director **Cindy Ehnes**.

Grossman notes that a discount plan is often a more practical solution for individual enrollees than an indemnity or HMO plan.

First Dental launched a discount plan in California about 14 months ago called New Dental Choice, with approximately 7,500 dentists statewide. Fees are \$8 per month for individuals and \$10 per month for family coverage. ■