To: Local Newspapers

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RE: February 2016 is National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM)
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February Designated As Children’s Dental Health Month – Sugar Wars.

The American Dental Association, along with the ADA Foundation, and the Central Michigan District Health Department is pleased to announce that February 2016 is National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM). This month-long national health observance brings together thousands of dedicated dental professionals, healthcare providers, and educators to promote the benefits of good oral health to children, their caregivers, teachers and many others. February is also an important time to increase the focus on the value of regular dental check-ups and a balanced diet. This year’s campaign theme, “Sugar Wars” urges children to defeat the effects of sugar and maintain good oral health by brushing, flossing, rinsing, and eating healthy snacks.

The Central Michigan District Health Department staff would like to let the community know that we can provide oral screening and varnish applications for children 6 months to 35 months who are enrolled in or are eligible for Medicaid insurance coverage. This does not replace the needed dental exams that your child should still be receiving from a local dentist. Oral screenings and varnish applications are offered by trained Registered Nurses in all of the branch offices at CMDHD. Registered Nurses can also provide oral screenings twice a year for those without a dental home to determine the need for a referral to a dentist for evaluation and follow up care. Varnish applications will be performed to those clients up to 4 times per year, who are considered to be at a high risk of dental caries and gum disease, and who are not currently receiving treatments through a regular dentist. At the appointment, our staff works with clients to help them find and establish care at a local dentist office.

The goal of the Oral Screening and Varnish Application Program is to prevent tooth decay. Fluoride varnish is a protective coating that is painted on teeth to help prevent new cavities and to
help stop cavities that have already started. Fluoride varnish is endorsed by the American Dental Association and is approved by the FDA. In addition to regular dental care and fluoride, here are some tips from the American Dental Association to keep your young child's mouth healthy:

- Place only formula, milk or breast milk in bottles. Avoid filling the bottle with liquids such as sugar water, juice or soft drinks.
- Infants should finish their bedtime and naptime bottles before going to bed.
- If your child uses a pacifier, provide one that is clean—don't dip it in sugar or honey, or put it in your mouth before giving it to the child.
- Encourage children to drink from a cup by their first birthday and discourage frequent or prolonged use of sippy cups.
- Serve nutritious snacks and limit sweets to mealtimes.

Older children should follow the same rules of regular brushing, flossing, dental visits and eating a balanced diet, and avoiding surgery beverages like juice and soft drinks. Sugars and starches encourage the production of plaque which can attack tooth enamel. Also, it's not just the sugar in soft drinks that decays teeth; it's the acid too, making this double trouble.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org, LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @CMiDHD.

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