

Children with Special Health Care Needs: Foundational Articles and Recommendations

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Background

Treating children with special health care needs (SHCN) is an integral part of the practice of pediatric dentistry. Children with SHCN are defined as “those who have one or more chronic physical,

developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions, and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally.”

IAPD Recommendations

1. Practitioners should speak about patients with disabilities using “People First Language.” For example: “a child who ...”, “a child with ...” or, “a child who has...”.

Consensus-based statement › Global agreement 88%

2. Pediatric dental offices should accommodate children with special health care needs (SHCNs) in the design of their offices (e.g., wheelchair accessibility), and consider having equipment to help the child cope with dental care (e.g., weighted blankets, sun glasses, noise cancellation headphones).

Consensus-based statement › Global agreement 100%

3. Parent/legal guardian-derived medical histories should be validated with the child’s primary medical provider or electronic medical record. Medical history updates should be obtained at each appointment.

Consensus-based statement › Global agreement 94%

4. Children with SHCNs are heterogeneous, therefore caries risk assessment in children with SHCNs should be individualized based on the underlying medical conditions and chronic medications.

Consensus-based statement › Global agreement 100%

5. Prevention strategies should be customized and emphasized in children with SHCN.

Consensus-based statement › Global agreement 100%

6. Children with SHCNs should be offered the same standard of dental care as children without SHCNs whenever possible. Deviations from the standard of care and rationale should be documented.

Consensus-based statement › Global agreement 94%

7. Children with SHCNs may require more surgical procedures than children without SHCNs. Consequently, dentists should consider combining oral rehabilitation with other surgeries in order to limit exposure to general anesthesia in children with SHCN.

Consensus-based statement › Global agreement 94%

8. Partnership between the pediatric dental home, and the child’s medical home should be encouraged to improve their oral and overall health.

Consensus-based statement › Global agreement 94%