



The New England Center
for Children®
Autism Education and Research

THE NEW ENGLAND CENTER FOR CHILDREN CELEBRATES NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH WITH DENTAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

*NECC Marks 20 Years of Dental Health Education and Desensitization for
Children with Autism*

Southborough, Mass. – Feb. 28, 2018 – The New England Center for Children® (NECC®), a global leader in education for children with autism, celebrated National Children's Dental Health Month in February with its Improving Oral Hygiene program to provide dental services and desensitize children with autism to the dental office experience. This year marks the 20th anniversary of this innovative dental program that has helped hundreds of children and teenagers with autism.

The February 2018 National Children's Dental Health Month is sponsored by the American Dental Association and Crest + Oral B. The 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. This year's campaign slogan is "Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste and clean between your teeth for a healthy smile."

The NECC Improving Oral Hygiene program is an innovative dental care, desensitization and education effort. The program begins with a needs assessment of every student to identify dental health and any behavioral issues related to the dental experience. Many students have a customized oral hygiene program integrated into their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that may include teaching oral hygiene fundamentals such as brushing, flossing, swishing of mouthwash, eating a mouth-healthy diet, etc.

Many children with autism have difficulty with dental exams, which can preclude important preventative care. NECC utilizes an in-house dental suite with chair and dental tools to acclimate and desensitize children with autism to the dental experience. NECC established a protocol that broke the exam into multiple steps taken in a graduated fashion, moving through the process as each step was successful. The protocol includes walking into the room, sitting in the chair, bib application, bite blocker application, visual inspection of teeth, mock scaling, cleaning with

toothbrush, flossing, mock fluoride application and dental clinic probes. For children with autism, achieving success and comfort with each step often requires dozens of sessions over three to six months.

Children who are comfortable with the dental exam process receive twice-a-year oral care from the dental department of Franciscan Children's, a pediatric hospital in Brighton, Massachusetts. Dental care includes cleanings, cavity fillings, orthodontics and oral surgery.

“The NECC Improving Oral Hygiene program helps students learn about dental care and acclimates them to the dental office experience,” said Kelly McConnell, PhD, an NECC autism curriculum specialist who has presented NECC's dental program to researchers internationally. “Sharing our knowledge with educators and healthcare providers improves the dental experiences for children with autism all over the world.”

About The New England Center for Children

The New England Center for Children® (NECC®) is a world leader in education, research, and technology for children with autism. For more than 40 years, our community of teachers, researchers and clinicians have been transforming lives and offering hope to children with autism and their families. NECC's award-winning services include home-based, day, and residential programs; public school partnerships and consulting; the John and Diane Kim Autism Institute; and the ACE® ABA Software System currently used by more than 6,100 students and teachers in 27 states and 10 countries. NECC received the 2017 Award for International Dissemination of Behavior Analysis from the Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis (SABA). A 501c3 non-profit, The New England Center for Children is based in Southborough, MA, and also operates a center in Abu Dhabi, UAE. More information is available at www.necc.org.

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