
Frequency and cause of broken appointments for New Jersey children. LS SPEAR, NS TOFSKY*, S VONHAGEN, UMDNJ-NEW JERSEY DENTAL SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY, NEWARK, NJ.

The purpose of this study was to identify the frequency and cause of broken appointments for children in New Jersey. This study consisted of two parts. The first part was a questionnaire that was sent to a sample of 125 pediatric dentists in New Jersey. The second part consisted of a chart review of 144 pediatric patients who presented to the University of Medicine and Dentistry- New Jersey Dental School for emergency treatment, as well as telephone interviews with the caregivers who did not return for treatment following their emergency visits. The rate of broken routine appointments in private practice was almost equal to the rate of broken routine appointments at NJDS. Broken appointments were found to be twice as prevalent following emergency visits (20%) than for routine visits (9%) in private practice, and six times (60%) more common in the clinic setting. The barriers to the broken appointments ranged from financial factors to various caregivers factors; parent did not realize child needed further treatment, parent could not leave work, parent was seeking care elsewhere. Broken appointments are a significant issue among routine dental appointments as well as following emergency appointments. Managing broken appointments should target the cause of the broken appointment for effective patient care.