The TeethFirst! Academy:
Essential Elements of the Early Childhood Dental Visit

The TeethFirst! Academy is a professional development opportunity for Rhode Island oral health professionals to build their skills and comfort levels in treating young children.

The TeethFirst! Academy was developed by the faculty at the St. Joseph Health Services Pediatric & Family Dental Center.

It is available for free and can be scheduled to meet your needs, upon request.

The Academy is comprised of a didactic component (approximately three hours), peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and personalized technical assistance. Learning session content can be adapted to each group’s needs. Typical session objectives include:

- Understanding early childhood caries (ECC) as a chronic and infectious, but highly preventable disease
- Recognizing how a disease management approach can mitigate ECC consequences
- Identifying types of topical fluoride and clinical efficacy in managing ECC
- Communicating effectively with parents to facilitate selection of self-management goals and integration with daily routines
- Recognizing risk levels and use of a caries risk assessment tool (CAT)
- Advocating for children in RI and helping to encourage and support a dental home for all children, particularly those between one and three years of age.

TeethFirst! Academy sessions are led by:

- **Shreekrishna Akilesh, DMD, MPH**  
  Pediatric Faculty, St. Joseph Pediatric & Family Dental Center  
  Associate Program Director, Advanced Education in Pediatric Dentistry, Lutheran Medical Center

- **Maureen Ross, RDH, BS**  
  Education Coordinator, St. Joseph Pediatric & Family Dental Center

Both Dr. Akilesh and Ms. Ross have been part of the Early Childhood Caries Collaborative, a quality improvement effort of seven sites across the country including Children’s Hospital Boston and St. Joseph Health Services of RI that utilized a chronic disease management approach to improve outcomes for children with ECC. Dr. Akilesh and Ms. Ross also have an active role in training dental residents and dental, dental hygiene, and dental assisting students at St. Joseph Pediatric & Family Dental Center facilities.

For more information or to schedule a learning session for your group, please contact Maureen Ross at St. Joseph Health Services of RI by email mross@CharterCARE.org or phone (401) 456-4038.