**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**FOR PARENTS AND CARERS**

**WHAT IS SMILE SQUAD?**

Smile Squad is a Victorian Government program which provides free dental care to all Victorian government primary, secondary, P-12 and specialist school students. The Smile Squad program is being rolled out across the state in stages and all schools will be invited to participate by the end of 2023.

The Smile Squad dental team will visit schools to conduct a free annual dental health examination and provide free follow up treatment as needed for students. Services are provided during class time.

**HOW CAN MY CHILD ACCESS THE SMILE SQUAD PROGRAM?**

Students attending a Victorian government primary, secondary, P-12 or specialist school will be able to access the Smile Squad school dental program when it visits their school.

Consent is required for all students to access dental services through Smile Squad. Parent/carer consent must be provided for primary school aged students. Consent for secondary school students may be provided by a parent/carer or the student if they are considered to be a ‘mature minor’ by the treating clinician (see below for information about mature minors in Smile Squad). Only a Smile Squad treating clinician can decide if a student is considered to be a mature minor.

**IS SMILE SQUAD FREE FOR MY CHILD?**

Smile Squad provides completely free dental check-ups for all students in government schools. There is no out of pocket cost to parents/carers or students and they do not need a healthcare care, Medicare, or be eligible for the Commonwealth’s Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS)

Any follow up treatment that is required will also be provided for free. More information about free treatments is available here [Smile Squad](https://www.smilesquad.vic.gov.au/general-information).

For more information on the CDBS, visit <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-dental-benefits-schedule>.

**HOW DO I PROVIDE CONSENT FOR MY CHILD?**

Each student will receive a *‘Smile Squad consent form’* in their consent pack. Please note that each student will require their own form to be completed to take part in Smile Squad.

**Primary school aged students**

* Parent/carer consent must be collected for primary school aged students to receive an examination or follow up treatment from the Smile Squad dental program*.*

**Secondary school aged students**

* Students aged 18 years and over can generally provide consent for an examination and/or treatment themselves.
* Consent for secondary school aged students under 18 years of age may be provided by a parent/carer or the student themselves as a ‘mature minor’.
* If providing mature minor consent, the Smile Squad clinician will assess if the student is deemed a mature minor for the purpose of receiving an examination or follow up treatment from the Smile Squad dental services.
* If the clinician does not consider the student to be a mature minor, they will discuss this with the student and may contact their parent/carer to gain consent. The clinician may also encourage the student to attend the local community dental agency with a parent/carer.
* Secondary school aged students will generally be considered mature enough to leave class in order to attend the scheduled Smile Squad appointment. This is similar to the way in which secondary school aged students may attend wellbeing appointments on school site.

**WHAT IS A MATURE MINOR?**

The law recognises that as children become older and more mature, they are more capable of making their own decisions, including about seeking and obtaining their own health care. Young people may reach this stage before they turn 18 years of age. These young people are referred to as ‘[mature minors](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/young-people-and-health-services)’.

To be considered a mature minor, the Smile Squad clinician must be satisfied that the student has sufficient understanding of the risks, benefits, and possible complications of their condition and proposed treatment to give informed consent. A student maybe considered capable of making some dental treatment decisions but not others. Smile Squad clinicians are appropriately trained to assess mature minor status.

**WILL I KNOW IF MY CHILD HAS CONSENTED AS A MATURE MINOR?**

If a student has chosen to provide consent for themselves and the Smile Squad clinician deems them as a mature minor, you may not know that they have provided consent to access the program. Students will be encouraged to involve parents/carers in dental care through Smile Squad.

If a student has chosen to consent for themselves and the Smile Squad clinician does not consider the student to be a mature minor, the clinician will discuss this with the student and seek consent from the parent or carer prior to the dental examination or treatment. The clinician may also encourage the student to visit their local community dental agency with their parent/carer.

If a student is considered to be a mature minor, their health information must be kept confidential and cannot be disclosed unless it is with their consent, or the disclosure of the information is otherwise permitted by law.

**why does the smile squad dental clinician assess my child as being a mature minor and not the school?**

It is the responsibility of the Smile Squad clinician to assess whether a student is a mature minor for the purpose of accessing Smile Squad dental services at the school. Principals or other school staff working with students cannot provide an assessment of a student as a mature minor to access dental services.

The Dental Board of Australia’s [Code of Conduct](https://www.dentalboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/Policies-Codes-Guidelines/Code-of-conduct.aspx), states that good practice involves considering the young person’s capacity for decision making or consent. The Smile Squad clinician undertakes the assessment as the Smile Squad dental clinician will know what is required as part of the examination or follow up treatment appointment and, based on their assessment, whether the student has sufficient capacity to understand the nature and effect of their particular decision.

In seeking consent, Smile Squad clinicians must comply with the Dental Board of Australia’s Code of Conduct per their registration requirements, relevant legislation, and be guided by Dental Health Services Victoria guidelines.

The mature minor consent process occurs as follows:

* All secondary school aged students will receive a Smile Squad consent form that enables either parent/carer or mature minor consent.
* Mature minors may choose to complete and return this form themselves.
* The forms are returned to the visiting dental agency by the school in a sealed envelope.
* When the student attends the appointment that is scheduled by the agency, the Smile Squad clinicians will conduct an assessment during which time they will determine if the student is considered a mature minor.
* If the clinician does not consider the student to be a mature minor, they will discuss this with the student and may contact their parent/carer to gain consent. The clinician may also encourage the student to attend the local community dental agency with a parent / carer.

For further information, contact your Smile Squad agency or via smilesquad@health.vic.gov.au.

**I HAVE A CHILD who attends a SPECIALIST SCHOOL. WILL MY CHILD BE ABLE TO CONSENT AS A MATURE MINOR?**

Secondary school aged students attending specialist schools are able to fill in the ‘*Smile Squad consent form’* themselves (or with assistance) to provide consent for their own dental examination and follow up treatment.

It will then be the responsibility of the Smile Squad clinician to assess whether the student is a mature minor for the purpose of consenting to receive Smile Squad dental services at school. Principals or other school staff working with students cannot provide an assessment of a student as a mature minor to access dental services.

**Will THE SCHOOL HAVE ACCESS TO THE CONSENT FORM and health information i PROVIDE TO sMILE sQUAD?**

The completed Smile Squad consent forms are returned to Smile Squad in a sealed envelope. Schools do not view this information and do not keep a copy of this form.

When it is time for Smile Squad to visit the school, Smile Squad will provide a list of students who are attending appointments to the school. This is to enable them to co-ordinate the appointments and keep school staff informed of the whereabouts of the students.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

For more information on Smile Squad visit: [www.smilesquad.vic.gov.au](http://www.smilesquad.vic.gov.au).

If you have any questions, contact Smile Squad by email: smilesquad@health.vic.gov.au or phone: 1300 503 977.