**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**FOR SCHOOLS**

**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 progressively rolled out across the state and all eligible 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 A STUDENT ACCESS THE SMILE SQUAD PROGRAM?**

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

Consent is required for students to access dental services through Smile Squad. Parent/carer consent must be received 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).

Principals or other school staff cannot provide an assessment of a student as a mature minor for the purpose of participation in Smile Squad. It will be the responsibility of the Smile Squad clinician to make this assessment.

**how will smile squad being at my school affect school operations?**

Smile Squad visits will be arranged through your nominated school contact/s to minimise disruption to school operations and to maximise accessibility for students. Smile Squad will discuss any scheduling considerations (i.e. events, excursions, class times, student availability) with your school to plan appointments accordingly.

Your school should communicate appointment information to all staff (including casual relief teachers, specialist teachers and Educational Support staff) who may have a student attending a Smile Squad appointment.

To support student access, Smile Squad appointments will occur on the school site in Smile Squad vans or in designated rooms.

For some students, supervision may be required when moving between the classroom and the Smile Squad van or room. Smile Squad will discuss supervision requirements with the school contact/s prior to the commencement of the program.

**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 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’.

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.

**WILL I NEED TO DECIDE IF A STUDENT IN MY SCHOOL/CLASS IS A MATURE MINOR?**

It is the responsibility of the Smile Squad clinician to make an assessment if a student is a mature minor for the purpose of receiving treatment from the Smile Squad dental services at the school. Consent cannot be sought from or provided by principals or school staff.

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 an assessment to determine 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, schools can contact their Smile Squad agency or via smilesquad@health.vic.gov.au

Schools may wish to seek further advice about mature minor consent from DET legal services: [Legal Services (eduweb.vic.gov.au)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/intranet/Services/Legal-Services/Pages/default.aspx)

**A student in my class is not considered a mature minor by the smile squad dental clinician. Can I confirm a student’s mature minor status?**

Schools cannot provide an assessment of a student’s mature minor status to receive dental services. It will be the responsibility of the Smile Squad clinician to undertake an assessment to determine if a student is a mature minor for the purpose of receiving treatment from the Smile Squad dental team.

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.

**HOW WILL I KNOW IF A STUDENT IN MY CLASS HAS AN APPOINTMENT WITH SMILE SQUAD?**

Smile Squad will discuss any scheduling considerations (e.g. class times, excursions, events, assessments, student availability) with your school to ensure appropriate times are scheduled for each student. Where possible, Smile Squad will schedule each student’s appointment to minimise any additional burden for schools or families in managing appointment times.

Smile Squad will provide a list of students who have returned consent forms to the relevant school key contact for the program. Schools should communicate this information to all staff (including casual relief teachers, specialist teachers and ES staff) who may have a student attending a Smile Squad appointment.

**WILL THE SCHOOL RECEIVE A COPY OF THE SMILE SQUAD CONSENT FORM TO SEE IF A PARENT HAS CONSENTED?**

Previously, schools were required to file a copy of the student’s signed consent form in the school’s student filing system. However, this process has now been updated to reduce any additional burden on schools and align it with standard processes for recording student absences from class when attending a health and wellbeing appointment.

For schools with **primary school aged** students:

* As part of this process,schools with primary school aged studentsshould ensure parents/carers are aware and informed that when they are consenting to their child receiving dental services from Smile Squad, their child will be withdrawn from class to receive dental services in a room within the school or in a dental van on the school site, during school hours.
* An example of some text schools can include in an email/newsletter/notification is included in **the Guidance Tab.**
* Schools should make a note on the student’s record via their school’s student management software system that the student attended a *health and wellbeing appointment-Smile Squad appointment.*

For schools with **secondary school aged students**:

* Consent forms for secondary school aged students can be completed by parents/carers or by the student. If a student has completed their own consent form, mature minor status will be assessed by the clinician at the appointment before any examination or treatment is undertaken.
* Secondary school aged students will generally be considered mature enough to leave class in order to attend the scheduled appointment. This is similar to the way in which secondary school aged students may attend wellbeing appointments on school sites.
* Through the school’s student management system, schools should make a note on the student’s record that the student was out of class to attend a *health and wellbeing appointment-Smile Squad appointment.*

Please see further information on this in the guidance and resource section of PAL at [Dental Services: Policy | education.vic.gov.au](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/dental-services/policy)

**I WORK AT A SPECIALIST SCHOOL. I HAVE SOME SECONDARY SCHOOL AGED STUDENTS IN MY CLASS WHO MAY BE CONSIDERED MATURE MINORS. HOW DO THEY PROVIDE MATURE MINOR CONSENT?**

Secondary school aged students 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 clinicians to assess whether the student is considered to be a mature minor for the purpose of consenting to receive Smile Squad dental services at your school. Principals or other school staff working with students cannot provide an assessment of a student as a mature minor to access dental 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.

If the school require further information or more consent forms, please contact your Smile Squad agency or via smilesquad@health.vic.gov.au.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

For more information on the Smile Squad program 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.