



Dental Public Health Activities & Practices

Practice Number: 31002
Submitted By: Bureau of Family Health Services, Nevada State Health Division
Submission Date: May 2002
Last Updated: May 2002

SECTION I: PRACTICE OVERVIEW		
Name of the Practice: Passage of the Fluoridation Bill in Nevada		
Public Health Functions: Assurance – Population-based Interventions Assurance – Oral Health Communications Assurance – Building Linkages and Partnership for Interventions		
HP 2010 Objectives: 21-1 Reduce dental caries experience in children. 21-9 Increase persons on public water receiving fluoridated water.		
State: Nevada	Region: West Region IX	Key Words: Fluoridation, community water fluoridation, fluoridation law, legislation, prevention
Abstract: Prior to 2000, the Nevada statute specifically prohibited any water authority from implementing water fluoridation unless a majority of the citizens of the county had voted in favor of implementing fluoridation in that county. In 1999, Assemblywoman Giunchigliani introduced a fluoridation bill which mandated fluoridation in counties with a population of 100,000 or more. The final version of the bill passed by the Legislature mandated that fluoridation be implemented by March 1, 2000 in counties with a population of 400,000 or more (Clark County). Counties with populations of <400,000 were still prohibited from implementing fluoridation unless a majority of the voters in the county had voted to do so. The Governor was not comfortable signing the bill unless it was amended to require the residents of Clark County vote at the next general election on whether they wanted to <u>continue</u> fluoridation. The amendment passed, the Governor signed the bill, and on March 1, 2000, the Las Vegas Water Authority and the City of Henderson implemented community water fluoridation, increasing the percentage of Nevada residents with access to optimally fluoridated community water supplies from less than 2% to 65%. In November 2000, 56% of the voters in Clark County voted "No, fluoridation should not be ceased" and Clark County continues to enjoy the benefits of optimally fluoridated community water supplies today.		
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SECTION II: PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

History of the Practice:

Prior to 2000, the Nevada statute specifically prohibited any water authority from implementing water fluoridation unless a majority of the citizens of the county had voted in favor of implementing fluoridation in that county. Consequently, less than 2% of Nevada's resident had access to fluoridated community water supplies in 1999.

Justification of the Practice:

In 1992, the Nevada State Health Division conducted a Youth Oral Health Needs Assessment of the state of Nevada. The needs assessment found that:

- 67% of Nevada children examined had experienced tooth decay in permanent or primary teeth;
- 49% of first graders and 51% of sixth graders had active decay requiring dental treatment;
- 5% of first graders and 3% of sixth graders needed immediate care due to severe pain or infection.

A number of recommendations were forthcoming from the report, including a recommendation to develop and implement a plan for optimal fluoridation of drinking water in Nevada, with special priority given to the largest population centers. The report was widely disseminated. However, at that time, the key individuals controlling the process did not perceive fluoridation as an acceptable part of the solution.

Administration, Operations, Services, Personnel, Expertise and Resources of the Practice:

In 1996, the Nevada State Health Division participated in a conference called "Developing Partnerships: A Forum on Access to Dental Care for Low-Income Children in Nevada." One of the conference workgroups focused on fluoridation strategies. The following recommendations were forthcoming from the workgroup:

- Research the issue
- Standardize the message
- Identify support groups
- Identify opposition
- Implement an assertive education campaign
- Form a campaign committee

The decision was made to change policy by changing the statute. Assemblywomen Chris Giunchigliani, a Democrat from Clark County and a special education teacher, participated in the 1996 conference. In 1997, she introduced a bill requiring fluoridation of counties with a population of 100,000 or more (Clark and Washoe Counties). The bill did not have broad-based support and it died in Committee. More groundwork was needed.

In 1998, a second conference was convened called, "Oral Health 2000: Building Effective Community Coalitions." It was attended by approximately 200 dentists, dental hygienists, physicians, nurses, teachers, child advocates, and policy makers. Assemblywoman Chris Giunchigliani presented information on the long-term benefits and the cost-benefit ratio of fluoridation. She also discussed a fluoridation bill she was planning to introduce and the strategies needed to mobilize community and statewide support for passage of the bill in the 1999 legislature.

In addition, the Governor's Maternal and Child Health Advisory Board, Oral Health Subcommittee developed and disseminated an Oral Health Action Plan for Nevada. Changing statute to allow fluoridation without a county vote was identified as a priority.

A statewide coalition, Citizens for Healthy Smiles, was also formed with the goal of passage of a fluoridation bill in the 1999 legislature. The chair of the coalition was a well-known and well-respected child advocate with a history of successful projects both in and out of the legislature. The coalition began recruiting allies and planning for the legislative session. Coalition members included the Nevada Dental and Dental Hygienist Associations, the Washoe and Clark County District Health Departments, the Clark County School District, Junior League of Las Vegas, Head Start, the Community College of Southern Nevada Dental Hygiene Program, Health Access Washoe County, and Saint Mary's Hospital.

In 1999, Assemblywoman Giunchigliani introduced a fluoridation bill. The bill mandated fluoridation in counties with a population of 100,000 or more. In general, legislators in southern Nevada supported the bill and northern Nevada legislators opposed the bill. Compromises were crafted and amendments introduced. The final version of the bill passed by the Legislature mandated that fluoridation be implemented by March 1, 2000 in counties with a population of 400,000 or more (only Clark County). Counties with populations of <400,000 were still prohibited from implementing fluoridation unless a majority of the voters in the county had voted to do so. The Governor was not comfortable signing the bill unless it was amended to require that the residents of the Clark County vote at the next general election on whether they wanted to continue fluoridation. The amendment passed, the Governor signed the bill, and on March 1, 2000, the Las Vegas Water Authority and the City of Henderson implemented community water fluoridation, increasing the percentage of Nevada residents with access to optimally fluoridated community water supplies from less than 2% to 65%.

In November 2000, 56% of the voters in Clark County voted “No, fluoridation should not be ceased” and Clark County continues to enjoy the benefits of optimally fluoridated community water supplies today.

Budget Estimates and Formulas of the Practice:

Clark County Public Education Campaign \$60,000
Citizens for Healthy Smiles budget \$11,000

Lessons Learned and Plans for Improvement:

- Know the process
- Identify and recruit the support of allies
- Identify the opposition
- Neutralize the opposition
- Be flexible - you may win the battle instead of the war

Available Resources – Models, Tools and Guidelines Relevant to the Practice:

- Fluoridation Facts – American Dental Association
- This Office Recommends Water Fluoridation for Healthier Teeth poster – The Dental Health Foundation
- Community Water Fluoridation: The #1 Way to Prevent Tooth Decay brochure – American Public Health Foundation, American Dental Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Nevada State Health Division Website – Fluoride (<http://health2k.state.nv.us/oral/Fluoride.htm>)

SECTION III: PRACTICE EVALUATION INFORMATION

Impact/Effectiveness

Does the practice demonstrate impact, applicability, and benefits to the oral health care and well-being of certain populations or communities (i.e., reference scientific evidence and outcomes of the practice)?

A Task Force, in developing the Guide for Community Preventive Services, strongly recommends community water fluoridation as an effective intervention strategy based on systematic review of scientific evidence (MMWR, August 2001).

On March 1, 2000, the Las Vegas Water Authority and the City of Henderson implemented community water fluoridation, increasing the percentage of Nevada residents with access to optimally fluoridated community water supplies from less than 2% to 65%.

Efficiency

Does the practice demonstrate cost and resource efficiency where expenses are appropriate to benefits? Are staffing and time requirements realistic and reasonable?

Water fluoridation costs, on average, 72 cents per person per year in U.S. Every \$1 invested in water fluoridation yields \$38 savings in dental treatment costs.

Demonstrated Sustainability

Does the practice show sustainable benefits and/or is the practice sustainable within populations/communities and between states/territories?

Legislation passed mandating that fluoridation be implemented by March 1, 2000 in counties with a population of 400,000 or more (Clark County). Although the bill required that the residents of the Clark County vote at the next general election on whether they wanted to continue fluoridation, in November 2000, 56% of the voters in Clark County voted "No, fluoridation should not be ceased" and Clark County continues to enjoy the benefits of optimally fluoridated community water supplies today.

Collaboration/Integration

Does the practice build effective partnerships/coalitions among various organizations and integrate oral health with other health projects and issues?

A statewide coalition, Citizens for Healthy Smiles, was formed with the goal of passing the fluoridation bill in the 1999 legislature. Coalition members included the Nevada Dental and Dental Hygienist Associations, the Washoe and Clark County District Health Departments, the Clark County School District, Junior League of Las Vegas, Head Start, the Community College of Southern Nevada Dental Hygiene Program, Health Access Washoe County, and Saint Mary's Hospital.

County politics to pass the fluoridation bill involved Citizens for Healthy Smiles, County District Health Department, County District Board of Health, State Board of Health, Board of County Commissioners, Water Authority, and voters.

Objectives/Rationale

Does the practice address HP 2010 objectives, the Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health, and/or build basic infrastructure and capacity for state/territorial oral health programs?

The passing of the fluoridation bill in Nevada supports efforts in achieving the Healthy People 2010 objective of increasing persons on public water receiving fluoridated water.

Extent of Use Among States

Is the practice or aspects of the practice used in other states?

ASTDD State Synopses shows that in 2001, all 51 states including District of Columbia have programs for fluoridated community water supplies.