

## **The Arkansas Early Head Start/Head Start Oral Health Forums and Action Plan**

### **Background**

The Arkansas Office of Oral Health sponsored a series of three Head Start / Early Head Start Oral Health Forums. The Forums, funded by ASTDD through a grant from HRSA Maternal and Child Health Bureau, built upon oral health activities conducted over the past several years.

Various barriers keep disadvantaged populations from accessing oral health services. Oral health surveys in Arkansas continue to show a vast disparity in oral disease among the poor and minority populations. Dental screenings for Head Start children in various sites in and around Central Arkansas show that even among these young children, caries continues to be a serious problem. In UAMS ECCO Head Start / Early Head Start, 2217 children received dental screenings during 2000-2002, representing more than 10% of all the Head Start children in Arkansas. Of those screened, 31% required dental treatment, and 11% required emergency dental treatment. However, after appropriate referral, 27% of the children screened did not receive the necessary dental care.

The access problem is exacerbated because only a small percentage of dentists in Arkansas accept patients participating in Medicaid or AR KIDS First (the state SCHIP waiver program). Low reimbursement rates, approximately 50% of usual, customary and reasonable fees, make increased participation unlikely. At the same time, the Head Start children often rely on Medicaid providers for their health care. While screenings easily identify children in need of services, the lack of participating providers continues to be a barrier to access.

The Arkansas Oral Health Coalition was formed to address a wide variety of access, education, policy and prevention issues. Another activity of the Coalition has been the Governor's Oral Health Summits. The first Summit brought together more than 200 health care professionals, legislators and community participants to offer suggestions for the State Oral Health Plan. The final plan was drafted by the Office of Oral Health and adopted by the Arkansas Oral Health Coalition. The Plan discusses the various barriers to oral health for the state's most vulnerable populations and provides recommendations to address barriers, including within the Head Start / Early Head Start populations. The Governor's Oral Health Summit will be repeated on June 14, 2003 with an emphasis on oral health's relation to general health. The expected audience includes dentists, dental hygienists, physicians, nurses, and decision-makers. The Head Start / Early Head Start Oral Health Forums were based on the successful Governor's Oral Health Summit.

## **The Forum Planning Process**

The core planning group included the Office of Oral Health of the Arkansas Department of Health, the Arkansas Head Start Association, the Arkansas Head Start Collaboration Project, and four of the state's Head Start agencies. Local cooperating agencies were UAMS ECCO Head Start / Early Head Start (Little Rock, AR); Child Development Incorporated Head Start / Early Head Start (Russellville, AR); Jefferson Comprehensive Care System, Inc. Head Start (Pine Bluff, AR); and North Central Arkansas Development Council (Batesville, AR) The planning group began meeting in May of 2002 and developed initial goals and a draft forum agenda. Strategies for the forums were developed in a collaborative process involving each of the planning group's agencies.

Forum planning began in early June of 2002. Because of many commitments tied to the legislative session starting on January 13, 2003, the planning committee elected to hold the forums before the start of the session. The forums were held during November of 2002.

Registration materials (Appendix A) were developed and mailed by the Office of Oral Health. Head Start agencies forwarded the materials to interested Head Start parents and community leaders. Registrations were processed by the Office of Oral Health in cooperation with the Arkansas Head Start Collaboration Project. The Collaboration Project served as the fiscal agent for the Forums and provided travel stipends to qualifying parents.

## **Methods to Develop an Action Plan**

The Forum Planning Committee developed a basic agenda for each the three forums with special emphasis on engaging community leaders and Head Start / Early Head Start parents. The agenda included plenary sessions for attendees, followed by open facilitated discussion sessions meant to identify barriers, objectives and goals to improve oral health in the Head Start population.

The agenda was developed to provide maximum participation from Head Start staff and parents. A schedule of 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM was deemed more than adequate for the presentations and discussions and would allow parents to attend without interference to their children's schedules.

To facilitate forum attendance by a diverse audience, forum planners decided to conduct all forums outside the major metropolitan area of Central Arkansas. Because Head Start parents may have limited resources to travel to the forums, forum invitations included application for travel stipends. Locations were identified that provided adequate facilities for each session and allowed easy access from around the state.

Dates and locations:	
November 18, 2002	Russellville, Arkansas
November 19, 2002	Batesville, Arkansas
November 20, 2002	Pine Bluff, Arkansas

Agenda:	
9:30 – 10:00 AM	Registration
10:00 – 10:15	Welcome and Introductions
10:15 – 10:45	Head Start, its Mission and our Children
10:45 – 11:30	Oral Health in Arkansas, Barriers and Solutions
11:30 AM – 12:15 PM	Presentations from local parents and providers
12:15 – 12:45	Lunch
12:45 – 1:45	Facilitated small group discussions
1:45 – 2:15	Report from breakout sessions
2:15 – 2:30	Closing comments

Early experience showed that the size of the audiences made breakout sessions unnecessary. The facilitated discussion portion of each afternoon was conducted with all participants and proved to be most beneficial. Free flow of ideas was assured in this setting.

**Invitees and Participants**

Members of the Arkansas Oral Health Coalition helped with meeting arrangements and identified potential invitees. Plenary session speakers came from the Coalition members and sessions included presentations from local parents and providers. The local Head Start agencies across the state helped identify the invitees from communities, Head Start parent groups, and local health care providers.

Meeting planners intended that the forum attendees would be as diverse as the populations served by Head Start. Local Head Start agencies identified parents and health care professionals within their own communities.

To maximize input from attendees, each of the three forums was limited to no more than 30-35 attendees for a total of 54 parents, 7 speakers and 14 Head Start staff participants.

**Funding**

Total amount requested from ASTDD	\$ 5,000.00
Received from ASTDD	\$ 5,000.00

<b>Budget</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Forum announcement printing and mailing, preparation and dissemination of the Action Plan <i>in-kind contribution from the Office of Oral Health</i>	\$1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
Plenary session speakers' transportation, <i>in-kind contributions from the Office of Oral Health, BHM International, Inc, the Arkansas Head Start Association and Arkansas Head Start Collaboration Project</i>	\$600.00	\$ 600.00
Local speaker honoraria, 6 speakers @ \$100.00	\$600.00	\$ 100.00
Local arrangements, 3 forums @ \$500.00	\$1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
Travel stipends for needy parents and community representatives, 58 stipends @ \$50.00	\$2,900.00	\$ 1,100.00
Facilitators for small group breakout sessions, <i>in-kind contributions from Office of Oral Health, BHM International, Inc., the Arkansas Head Start Association and Arkansas Head Start Collaboration Project</i>	\$1,800.00	\$ 1,800.00
Total in-kind contributions	\$3,900.00	\$ 3,900.00
Development of CD-ROM		\$ 2,700.00
<b>Total from ASTDD grant</b>	<b>\$5,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 5,000.00</b>

## **Evaluation**

A structured evaluation instrument (Appendix B) was used at the completion of each forum. All attendees were asked to evaluate both the plenary and discussion portion of the forum. Overall, all attendees scored every portion of the forum as either good or excellent. The compilation of the evaluations is included in Appendix C.

## **Arkansas Head Start / Early Head Start Oral Health**

### **Identified Barriers and Solutions - Action Plan**

Open discussion at each forum identified numerous barriers to optimum oral health for the Head Start population. Attendees also identified potential solutions to these barriers and action steps to accomplish the goals. The Office of Oral Health, with input from the Arkansas Oral Health Coalition, has developed the final version of the Action Plan and submits it to ASTDD.

Implementation of the Action Plan will require extensive efforts by the Head Start agencies and Oral Health Coalition members. In addition, the Action Plan may require requests for funding from the Legislature during the 2003 session or in later biennium sessions. However, the agencies and organizations involved are committed to the success of the Action Plan.

#### **Barriers**

Identified barriers and solutions from the three forums were similar and are combined into a single listing.

- Individuals sometimes lack personal responsibility or need to change oral health behaviors.
- Few dentists treat patients in the Head Start / Early Head Start age ranges.
- Some participating dentists will not see children after they leave Head Start.
- Head Start children, their siblings and their parents in many cases do not have a dental home.
- Head Start families and staff seldom have dental insurance coverage.
- Auxiliaries are not utilized to their full capacity .
- Parents lack education on oral health and have insufficient background on primary prevention issues such as fluoridation.
- Parents have little knowledge of local resources.
- Parents and older siblings not enrolled in Medicaid also lack access to dental care.
- Dentists sometimes want cash up front for treatment.
- Head Start staff and parents have little information on the prevention of child abuse and other forms of family violence.

## Action Plan

Goal #1: Increase access to care through advocacy

Action Steps:

1. Head Start parents will advocate for increased funding of Medicaid.
  - a. Appropriate members of the Arkansas Oral Health Coalition will assist Head Start advocates in drafting letters to decision-makers for increased funding for Medicaid.
  - b. The Arkansas Head Start Association will provide a list of legislators and their contact information to Head Start parents.
  - c. The Arkansas Head Start Association will encourage Head Start parents to develop an ongoing relationship with their own legislators.
  - d. Head Start parents will advocate for increased funding of ARKids A and B, by contacting Governor Mike Huckabee and members of the Arkansas General Assembly.
2. Head Start parents will advocate with the dental board to expand the scope of practice for dental hygienists to perform screenings, apply dental sealants, and administer fluoride mouthrinse under general supervision
3. Head Start parents and Head Start staff will lobby insurance companies for a dental insurance package for parents and staff
4. Head Start parents and staff will advocate with the Arkansas Department of Education for school nurses to inquire if entering students have had a dental examination.
5. Head Start agencies will work with the Arkansas State Dental Association and the Arkansas Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Association to create a system for dental treatment payment plans.

Goal #2: Increase understanding of oral health and the role of Head Start for Head Start parents, Head Start staff members and the dental community.

1. The Arkansas Office of Oral Health will provide materials to Head Start groups to increase awareness about maternal transmission of caries-causing bacteria.
2. The Arkansas Office of Oral Health will provide materials to Head Start groups to increase awareness about fluorides and fluoridation.
  - a. The Arkansas Office of Oral Health will pursue production of a CD-ROM with information on various aspects of oral health literacy, including oral hygiene, fluoridation, fluoride supplements, maternal transmission, and website links for oral health information. The CD-ROM will also include appropriate Power Point presentations for educating staff, parents, dentists and communities on both oral health and Head Start.
3. The Arkansas Oral Health Coalition will approach Delta Dental Plan of Arkansas to make the "Teeth on the Go" educational program available, at no charge, to Head Start agencies.

4. The Arkansas Oral Health Coalition will work with various organizations and agencies to ensure that appropriate oral health education materials are provided in both Spanish and English.
5. Head Start agencies will provide Head Start parents with American Dental Association educational materials on early childhood caries and oral hygiene.
6. The Arkansas Oral Health Coalition will pursue funding for research to show whether children who participate in Head Start enter adult life with better oral health.
7. The Arkansas Head Start Association will provide information to Head Start agencies and parents on access to care through the Community Health Center (CHC) system and how to create a CHC in their communities.

Goal #3: Increase awareness of community water fluoridation among Head Start parents and staff.

1. The Arkansas Office of Oral Health will provide educational programs on community water fluoridation to Head Start agencies, the state Head Start conference and to the health specialists roundtable.
2. The Arkansas Office of Oral Health will work with local Head Start agencies on new water fluoridation initiatives.

Goal #4: Increase awareness of family violence prevention among Head Start staff and parents.

1. The Arkansas Office of Oral Health will offer training on family violence prevention (including child abuse and neglect, intimate partner violence and elder abuse and neglect) for Head Start agencies across Arkansas.

## Head Start / Early Head Start Oral Health Forums

Arkansans have a wonderful opportunity to address oral health access for our children in Head Start and Early Head Start. Through a grant to the Office of Oral Health, the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors is supporting a series of oral health forums across Arkansas. By involving communities, legislators and Head Start / Early Head Start parents, we will develop an action plan to address the oral health needs of our young children.

The grant allows you to attend one of these forums free of charge. For those parents that need help in attending the forum, we even have a limited number of \$50.00 stipends to help offset the cost for getting to the conference. No registration fee is required and lunch will be served.

Please take advantage of this unique opportunity. Complete the registration form from this brochure and send it in today. Attendance is limited and it's first come-first served. Register today. All registrants will be notified by mail. Take this opportunity to help your child's oral health and to give every child in Arkansas the opportunity to have a great smile. We hope to see you at one of the forums.

Sincerely,

Lynn Douglas Mouden, DDS, MPH  
Director, Office of Oral Health  
Arkansas Department of Health

Ann Patterson, Director  
State Collaboration Project  
Arkansas Head Start Association

### Dates and Locations

November 18, 2002  
Chambers Cafeteria East  
Arkansas Tech University  
Russellville, Arkansas

November 19, 2002  
Ramada Inn  
Highway 167 North  
Batesville, Arkansas

November 20, 2002  
Ramada Inn  
2 Convention Center Plaza  
Pine Bluff, Arkansas

If you have questions about the forums, please contact:

Karen Cook  
Russellville  
479-968-6493

Paula McClellan  
Batesville  
870-793-3234

Dorothy Young  
Pine Bluff  
870-534-5913

### Agenda (same at each location)

9:30 AM - 10:00 AM	Registration
10:00 AM - 10:15 AM	Welcome and Introductions
10:15 AM - 10:45 AM	Head Start, Its Mission and our Children
10:45 AM - 11:30 AM	Oral Health in Arkansas, Barriers and Solutions
11:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Presentations from local providers and parents
12:00 PM - 12:45 PM	Lunch (provided)
12:45 PM - 1:45 PM	Small workgroups on proposed action plan
1:45 PM - 2:15 PM	Reports from workgroups
2:15 PM - 2:30 PM	Closing comments

These forums are supported by a grant from the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors. The forum steering committee enjoys representation from: Office of Oral Health, Arkansas Department of Health; Arkansas Head Start Association; Arkansas Head Start Collaboration Project; BHM International, Inc.; UAMS ECCO Head Start; Child Development, Inc.; North Central Arkansas Development Council; Jefferson Comprehensive Care Center, Inc.

**Registration for the Arkansas Head Start / Early Head Start Oral Health Forum**  
(please print all information)

Appendix C

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to attend the oral health forum being held in:

Russellville, Arkansas  
November 18, 2002

Batesville, Arkansas  
November 19, 2002

Pine Bluff, Arkansas  
November, 20, 2002

I am the parent of a Head Start or Early Head Start child. Attendance at one of the oral health forums will be impossible without financial support. I request that I be provided the \$50.00 stipend to help cover my travel expenses.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please mail the above registration form to:  
Rhonda Sledge, RDH, MHSA  
Office of Oral Health  
4815 W. Markham Street, Slot 41  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72205

or fax to:  
Rhonda Sledge, RDH, MHSA  
501-661-2055

Office of Oral Health  
4815 W. Markham, Slot 41  
Little Rock, AR 72205

Head Start / Early Head Start Oral Health Forums

Evaluation

Please circle the date and location that you attended:

Dates and Locations

November 18, 2002

Chambers Cafeteria East
Arkansas Tech University
Center Plaza
Russellville, Arkansas
Arkansas

November 19, 2002

Ramada Inn
Highway 167 North
Batesville, Arkansas

November 20, 2002

Ramada Inn
2 Convention
Pine Bluff,

(Please circle your answers)

I am a: parent Head Start staff dentist legislator other (specify)

Please give your evaluation of the topics:

Table with 3 rows and 6 columns. Columns: Topic, Poor, 2, 3, 4, Excellent. Rows: Head Start, Its Mission and Our Children; Oral Health in Arkansas, Barriers and Solutions; Presentations from local providers and parents.

Small workgroups:

Table with 4 rows and 6 columns. Columns: Statement, Strongly Disagree, 1, 2, 3, 4, Strongly Agree, 5. Rows: Session allowed sufficient time for discussion; Facilitators directed the discussion appropriately; I felt my input was recognized and used by the group; The report reflected the group consensus.

The facilities were adequate: 1 2 3 4 5

PLEASE OFFER ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS FORM.