

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start XII Oral Health Forum: Enhancing Partnerships for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Oral Health

**Washington, DC
February 6, 2003**

Prepared for:

Health Resources and Services Administration and
Administration for Children and Families
Region XII, Washington DC

Prepared by:

Jane Steffensen, MPH, CHES
Department of Community Dentistry
University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio
and Health Systems Research, Inc.



May 2003

Executive Summary

The Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Region XII Forum, "Enhancing Partnerships for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and Oral Health" was held on February 6, 2003 in Washington, DC. This Regional Forum was held as a follow-up conference to the national Head Start Partners Oral Health Forum convened in 1999 to focus attention on early childhood oral health. This was the fifth in a series of regional forums hosted by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The Region XII Forum was held in conjunction with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), HRSA, Migrant and Seasonal Program Branch, Head Start Bureau (HSB), ACF and Region XII Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS), Quality Improvement Center (QIC).

Participants at the Forum had expertise in a broad range of disciplines and were working at the national, state, and local levels. They represented diverse organizations, agencies, and professional groups in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Attendees had interests in Head Start, migrant and seasonal health, and oral health. The forum included plenary sessions with presentations and small group discussion sessions.

Participants assessed and prioritized current oral health issues and challenges faced by Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs. They identified promising practices and developed strategies for regional action to enhance the oral health component in MSHS. They also outlined specific activities to support MSHS programs in increasing access to dental care, enhancing prevention, and expanding effective oral health education. Forum participants recommended collaborations among organizations and agencies to improve oral health status in Migrant and Seasonal Head Start children. The strategy plan delineated ways that Region XII can collaborate with HRSA's Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) as well as other entities to combine efforts and improve oral health outcomes in MSHS programs. The collaborations included actions within agencies, across disciplines, and among organizations at the national, regional, state, and local levels.

The work groups focused on oral health education, prevention, and access to dental care and prioritized the following issues:

Oral Health Education

- Lack of a comprehensive approach to oral health education
- Lack of available oral health resources to grantees
- Oral health education of parents is currently not a "high" priority for grantees

- Lack of consistency among physicians in delivering oral health and a gap between dentists and physicians
- Lack of a system to track “real” data on oral health disparities, what sources for care are used, etc.

Prevention

- Lack of prevention programs that specifically address oral health care needs of migrant and seasonal farmworker children
- Programs do not specifically address migrant and seasonal farmworker lifestyle issues (e.g., culture, housing, socioeconomic factors) related to oral health
- Lack of a focus on outreach delivery efforts that reach migrant and seasonal farmworkers in a variety of settings
- Need for training and technical assistance (T/TA) about prevention to outreach and other MSHS staff
- Lack of providers for preventive care

Access to Dental Care

- Disconnect of the delivery system
- Workforce issues
- Financing challenges
- Families' values, knowledge and reality
- Policy challenges