

PROPOSED ORAL HEALTH ACTION PLAN DRAFT, December 2002



The Minnesota Head Start Association and the Minnesota Head Start Collaboration Office, in partnership with the Minnesota Association for Community Dentistry conducted a Statewide Head Start Oral Health Forum on December 11, 2002. At this forum, a broad group of stakeholders provided input into the development of an Oral Health Action Plan for Minnesota Head Start. The proposed plan, which follows, challenges Head Start agencies across Minnesota to engage in statewide advocacy to enhance oral health services targeting low-income families and to conduct a variety of educational activities to improve the oral health of Head Start children and families.

Minnesota Head Start Association and local Head Start agencies will advocate and encourage:

- The Minnesota Legislature to develop a community-based public health delivery system for oral health services that meets the needs of residents that participate in Minnesota Health Care Programs. Toward the development of this system, we will also encourage the Minnesota Department of Human Services to develop and expand successful pilot projects that have been shown to increase dental access for at-risk populations.
- The Minnesota Board of Dentistry to expedite regulations related to enacted legislation to expand functions for allied dental professionals.
- The Minnesota Legislature to preserve funding and coverage for oral health services for all Minnesota Health Care Program recipients.
- Minnesota Health Plans to develop a public education campaign about the importance of oral health during the early years of life and how to prevent dental disease in young children.
- The Minnesota School of Dentistry to create continuing educational opportunities for dental providers to learn public health approaches and culturally-sensitive practices for oral health prevention and treatment targeting at-risk populations.

Within the Head Start Community, the Association and its partners will:

- Work with a broad coalition of Minnesota organizations to education dental providers about the extent of unmet needs for dental services in Minnesota and how these needs could be addressed through a public health approach to oral health.
- Train Health Coordinators (primarily allied health professionals) annually in the latest information about oral health prevention, screening and follow-up. And, work with dental professionals to develop a standardized curriculum and resource materials to keep Head Start agencies and staff up-to-date on oral health trends and prevention strategies.

- Develop partnerships with the University of Minnesota and other dental health training programs in Minnesota to increase local or regional dental screening and treatment opportunities for Head Start children and their families.
- Explore the feasibility of working with the University of Minnesota Department of Pediatrics to train health coordinators in the application of fluoride varnishes on children's' teeth and of securing funds for a fluoride varnish program for Head Start children.