

Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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Oral Health Training and Ongoing Education and Resources for Health and Dental Care Professionals Serving Pregnant Women, Infants and Young Children

The New York State Department of Health Bureau of Dental Health (NYSDOH-BDH) has a multi-faceted strategy for educating health and dental care professionals on the importance of oral health, recommendations for the provision of oral health services, and the use of evidence-based preventive interventions for pregnant women, infants, and young children. Strategies included system level changes such as the development and dissemination of "*Oral Health Care during Pregnancy and Early Childhood Practice Guidelines*", development of tools for practitioners, and incorporation of oral health into prenatal care standards in the Medicaid program. The Bureau partnered with Perinatal Networks to promote the interventions. In addition, the Bureau collaborated with the School of Public Health to provide information via a satellite broadcast for prenatal, child health and dental care practitioners. The Guidelines encourage health providers to take a more active role in assessing the oral health of their patients, and to incorporate oral health as a routine standard of prenatal care and pediatric care.

Under the State's HRSA TOHSS grant, extensive outreach was conducted to prenatal and pediatric programs across the state. Information and recommendations about maternal, infant, and child oral health; caries risk reduction strategies; and recommendations on oral health disease prevention and treatment were provided and a variety of training programs held for perinatal networks and prenatal providers, child health educators and Head Start/Early Head Start Programs, maternal-infant home visiting programs, the WIC Program, dental hygienists and dental health educators, child abuse prevention programs, child advocacy organizations, rural health organizations, local health department educators, and dental organizations. These activities resulted in establishment of a network of over 540 individuals and 328 organizations and programs that provide service to pregnant women, infants and young children. Oral health information, materials, resources and updates on oral health care during pregnancy, infancy and early childhood are routinely shared with network members.

Low literacy materials, mini-posters, and a wallet card were developed and distributed to prenatal, infant and child health providers for use with their respective patients. These materials reinforce the importance of oral health during pregnancy and include guidelines and information on oral health care for infants and young children. Materials are available in both English and Spanish.

Utilizing Medicaid claims data, the Bureau is analyzing changes in the percentage of children from 0 to 3 years of age receiving oral health preventive services, especially claims for fluoride varnish applications. It is also working closely with the Divisions of Family Health and Nutrition on accessing and analyzing the most currently available data on oral health indicators from PRAMS and WIC.

Costs for development and dissemination of the Practice Guidelines were supported by the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant and a CDC Cooperative Agreement Grant, while the satellite broadcast training was made possible by a grant from the March of Dimes. The TOHSS grant supported establishment and expansion of the network, training programs, and development of low literacy materials.

Continuation of these activities is addressed by existing Bureau of Dental Health staff.

Lessons Learned:

It is important for the success of the program to continue to maintain regular contacts with individuals and programs participating in oral health education activities. The provision of training cannot be a

one-time offering, especially if behavioral change is the ultimate objective; ongoing communication, routine contacts, periodic distribution of oral health education materials and resources, and the development of additional training programs are all required. Given the economic climate, the use of the internet and web-based training technologies are proving to be the most cost-effective venues for trainings and the provision of resources.

To continue to encourage the incorporation of oral health as a routine standard of care for pregnant women, infants and young children, the Bureau is presently involved in a pilot project with the Albany Medical Center and its affiliated WIC Program to provide oral health assessments, fluoride varnish applications, risk reduction education, anticipatory guidance, and referrals to dental care providers for the establish of a dental home and/or the provision of any needed treatment services. The training programs provided to the WIC Program at its statewide conferences and the ongoing provision of low literacy oral health materials for use with WIC clients paved the way for the initiation and implementation of this pilot project.

The results of the pilot project, as well as examples of how other individuals and programs are using oral health education and resources with their respective clients, will be shared with the Bureau's network of over 540 individuals and 328 organizations and programs providing services to pregnant women, infants and young children.

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