



Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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Mobile Dental Public Health Clinics

The State of Tennessee, Department of Health, Bureau of Health Services purchased three mobile dental clinics to provide comprehensive dental services to children in underserved areas in 2001. Each clinic is a 37-foot RV with two dental operatories and is parked at elementary schools. One of the mobile clinics was purchased using MCH funding and the other two with special needs state funding. The cost for purchasing one mobile unit was approximately \$250,000. The State of Tennessee funds the continuing cost of operating the clinics. The mobile clinics are equipped for preventive and restorative services and include intraoral x-ray and nitrous. Each mobile clinic is staffed with a dentist and dental assistant.

Children on free and reduced lunch are eligible for free dental services in the mobile clinic. Parental consent is required and a medical history is obtained for each child. The children leave the classroom, receive dental services in the mobile dental clinic, and return to class. The school is selected based upon need and the screening information provided via Tennessee's School Based Dental Prevention Program. A great deal of time is spent in the selected schools with faculty and staff to prepare them to manage students after they have received dental services such as extractions and fillings. The mobile clinics are located in Northeast, Middle, and West Tennessee to address the need to improve access to care for children in many of the rural counties. The mobile clinics are particularly useful in areas that do not have dental clinics in a fixed facility and where school transport programs are unavailable.

When fully staffed, each mobile dental clinic is able to provide dental services to approximately 300 children during a school year. The mobile dental clinics are delivering needed preventive and restorative treatment to high risk children that include examinations, cleanings, dental sealants, topical fluoride applications, restorations, and extractions.

Lessons Learned:

One of the issues has been servicing the mobile units. I would recommend any agency purchasing a mobile also purchase a service contract as well. Staffing has been problematic at times as not everyone is comfortable providing care in this environment.

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