



Dental Public Health Activities & Practices

Practice Number: 04004
Submitted By: Office of Oral Health, Arizona Department of Health Services
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SECTION I: PRACTICE OVERVIEW		
Name of the Practice: <p style="text-align: center;">Financial Support for Community Water Fluoridation</p>		
Public Health Functions: Assurance – Collaboration and Partnership for Integration Assurance – Population-based interventions Assurance – Building Linkages & Partnerships for Interventions		
HP 2010 Objectives: 21-9 Increase persons on public water receiving fluoridated water. 21-1 Reduce dental caries experience in children. 21-3 Increase adults with teeth who have never lost a tooth.		
State: Arizona	Region: Southwest Region IX	Key Words: Community water fluoridation, fluoridation, water fluoridation, community support, funding fluoridation equipment
Abstract: <p>Water fluoridation, although a scientifically sound, safe and cost-effective measure to improve oral health, becomes a political controversy in some communities. Funding is frequently an issue tied to the debate. Since 1999, the Arizona Department of Health Services, Office of Oral Health (OOH) provides financial support for communities that are considering or have recently approved but not yet implemented community water fluoridation. Specifically, the OOH supplements local funds to initially purchase and install required fluoridation equipment through grants. Each grant ranged from \$40,000 to \$63,000. The funding does not typically cover the entire cost of purchasing and installing the fluoridation equipment but does provide a much needed support to communities to initiate water fluoridation. This grant program has successfully assisted three communities in implementing community water fluoridation in Arizona over the past three years. The three communities with a total of over 150,000 residents have been assisted with the purchase of their start-up fluoridation equipment. In one community, although water fluoridation was already approved, the funding for the start-up could not be secured and the grant enabled the community to implement its fluoridation. In the other two communities, where community water fluoridation had not yet been approved, information on the availability of funding from the state health department was provided to the town/city councils to assist in assessing the financial ability of the communities to implement fluoridation. This resulted in approving water fluoridation for the communities.</p>		
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SECTION II: PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

History of the Practice:

Since 1999, the Arizona Department of Health Services, Office of Oral Health has provided grants to assist local municipalities in start-up of water fluoridation by purchasing fluoridation equipment and paying for its installation. Each grant ranged from \$40,000 to \$63,000. Three communities with a total of over 150,000 residents have been assisted with the purchase of their start-up fluoridation equipment. In one community, although water fluoridation was already approved, the funding for the start-up could not be secured and the grant enabled the community to implement its fluoridation. In the other two communities, where community water fluoridation had not yet been approved, information on the availability of funding from the state health department was provided to the town/city councils to assist in assessing the financial ability of the communities to implement fluoridation. This resulted in approving water fluoridation for the communities.

Justification of the Practice:

Community water fluoridation was one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th century. Nearly a hundred national and international organizations endorse/support water fluoridation as an effective method for preventing tooth decay. A recent systematic review of scientific evidence by a special task force in developing a Guide to Community Preventive Services resulted in a strong recommendation of water fluoridation's effectiveness (MMWR in August 2001).

Water fluoridation, although a scientifically sound, safe, cost-effective measure to improve oral health, becomes a political controversy in some communities. Funding is frequently an issue tied to the debate. The funding offered by the Office of Oral Health assists communities in addressing the initial financial costs associated with community water fluoridation.

Administration, Operations, Services, Personnel, Expertise and Resources of the Practice:

Communities considering water fluoridation or having already approved its implementation for the near future are notified of the availability of funding. Once the community votes to implement water fluoridation, a contract from the state health department and the community is drafted. Communities must provide some of their own funding or have solicited financial support from other entities to augment the grant provided by the Office of Oral Health for start-up water fluoridation costs. When the water fluoridation equipment has been installed and operational for at least one month, with a water report provided to the Office of Oral Health as evidence of optimal fluoridation levels, the funding amount of the contract or in the amount up to the actual costs of equipment purchase and installation is transferred.

Budget Estimates and Formulas of the Practice:

Approximately \$40,000 annually has been available to communities for water fluoridation.

Lessons Learned and/or Plans for Improvement:

- Prior approval of water fluoridation by a community better facilitates the dissemination of funds in a more timely manner.
- A close working relationship with the water utilities manager is important for coordinating assistance during times of political unrest.

Available Resources - Models, Tools and Guidelines Relevant to the Practice:

- A brochure on the benefits of community water fluoridation.

SECTION III: PRACTICE EVALUATION INFORMATION

Impact/Effectiveness

Does the practice demonstrate impact, applicability, and benefits to the oral health care and well-being of certain populations or communities (i.e., reference scientific evidence and outcomes of the practice)?

Water fluoridation has been shown to have substantial lifelong decay prevention effects and is a highly cost-effective means of preventing tooth decay in the United States, regardless of socioeconomic status (American Dental Association, Fluoridation Facts, 1999). A special task force in developing a Guide to Community Preventive Services strongly recommends water fluoridation based on a systematic review of the scientific evidence on water fluoridation's effectiveness (MMWR in August 2001). This grant program has successfully assisted three communities in implementing community water fluoridation in Arizona over the past three years.

Efficiency

Does the practice demonstrate cost and resource efficiency where expenses are appropriate to benefits? Are staffing and time requirements realistic and reasonable?

Communities must provide some of their own funding or have solicited financial support from other entities to augment the grant provided by the Office of Oral Health for start-up water fluoridation costs. Internal management of this program is very easy and is essentially just a business function to establish a contract to transfer available funds.

Demonstrated Sustainability

Does the practice show sustainable benefits and/or is the practice sustainable within populations/communities and between states/territories?

The Arizona Department of Health Services, Office of Oral Health has provided water fluoridation grants since 1999. From a state perspective, the model relies upon ongoing subsidies that have been primarily sustained from CDC funding and by the state health department's political will to prioritize funding for this purpose.

Collaboration/Integration

Does the practice build effective partnerships/coalitions among various organizations and integrate oral health with other health projects and issues?

Community water fluoridation campaigns are traditionally community-based partnerships to effect local policy. This grants program does not engage in the local politics but only provides a possible resource to implement the will of local leadership (town/city councilors) or voters.

Objectives/Rationale

Does the practice address HP 2010 objectives, the Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health, and/or build basic infrastructure and capacity for state/territorial oral health programs?

Community water fluoridation, a population-based intervention that builds infrastructure for state oral health program, is effective in preventing dental caries in both children and adults. The grants program supports water fluoridation and efforts to achieve the following HP2010 objectives:

- 21-9 Increase persons on public water receiving fluoridated water
- 21-1 Reduce dental caries experience in children
- 21-3 Increase adults with teeth who have never lost a tooth

Extent of Use Among States

Is the practice or aspects of the practice used in other states?

The ASTDD State Synopses show that 100% of states have water fluoridation programs.