



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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The Development of an Innovative Nutrition Education Model for the Prevention of Early Childhood Caries in WIC Children

Funding provided through a USDA Infrastructure Grant for a two-year period, provided an opportunity to develop an educational model to prevent Early Childhood Caries (ECC) in Alabama WIC children. The objectives were to prevent ECC, improve the oral health of WIC women, children and their families, emphasize the link between diet/nutrition and oral health status, and to promote utilization of the oral health system in at-risk populations. Alabama's WIC program, the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health and the Oral Health Branch (OHB) partnered to develop a culturally sensitive educational model to prevent Early Childhood Caries in WIC children. Two behavioral scientists from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) School of Public Health were contracted to plan, collect and analyze data from WIC clients and develop a culturally sensitive, low-literacy level educational model. Caries prevalence data was collected from 2-5 year old WIC children throughout the state to assess need and establish a baseline. Focus groups with mothers and caregivers from various ethnic groups were conducted to determine which cultural habits might impact the prevalence of ECC. An educational model was developed for nutritionists to utilize in WIC clinics statewide to educate women, infants, children and their families through the WIC program. Approximately \$37,000 funded the development and production of teaching tools as well as provision of audio-visual equipment to 12 WIC clinics without such equipment. Additional expenses included oral hygiene supplies and mouth models for WIC clinics. The educational model for WIC nutritionists and related teaching tools will be delivered to 125 WIC sites during the summer/fall of 2002. WIC children, mothers and pregnant women will annually receive education, oral hygiene supplies and other interventions that promote good oral health. The state and county WIC staff enthusiastically supports this initiative and have been involved in all phases of planning and development. Positive outcomes should evolve with minimal additions to the current program requirements established by USDA regulations. This model will serve as the impetus for future oral health partnerships in non-traditional settings.

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