



## Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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### Alaska Head Start Dental Action Plan

The first Head Start oral health forum was held in November 2002. The planning of the forum included the following strategies: (1) An orientation regarding the ASTDD grant to convene a Head Start forum and to develop an dental action plan was provided to Head Start Directors, the State Head Start Collaboration Office, and Prevention Associates via a teleconference; (2) The Child Health Unit manager was enlisted to assist with the forum; (3) Prevention Associates staff contacted Head Start Directors for input on strategies/current activities to improve dental access, oral health of children enrolled in Early Head Start/ Head Start and program surveillance data; (4) Input was obtained from the Alaska Head Start Association/Head Start Directors on oral health/dental issues and strategies being used to address dental access and improve the oral health of enrolled children during a joint meeting; and (5) A planning group was established to develop the dental action plan based on input from participants attending the Head Start oral health forum.

An outcome of this first Head Start oral health forum was the development of the *Alaska Head Start Dental Action Plan*, which was released in 2003. The plan has been updated in 2005 with planned activities related to the following priority issues:

- Education of Head Start Staff – activities related to oral hygiene instructions, assessment of early childhood caries, engaging dentists and fluoride education.
- Education of Head Start Parents – activities related to educating parents to address fears of dentistry, feeding practices, recognition of ECC and enrollment in Medicaid/Denali KidCare.
- Preventive Services – activities related to fluoride varnishes and supplements, xylitol gum, chlorhexidine rinses and community water fluoridation.
- Access to Dental Services – activities related dental advocacy, dental health aides, pediatric dentists, community health centers, and new underserved populations.
- Surveillance – activities related to Basic Screening Survey (BSS), improve Program Information Report (PIR) data and use of other program data (WIC and Medicaid).
- Dental Workforce/Training Issues – activities related to WICHE Program, recruitment of dentists, student loan forgiveness, dental training on dental management of Young Children and treating pregnant women, and Tribal dental training on working with Dental Health Aides.
- Financing Issues – activities related to incentives for dentists to treat young children, incentives for significant Medicaid dental providers, and incentives for dental services provided in rural/remote Alaska (or Supporting Provider Travel).

Since 2003, the Oral Health Work Group/Coalition serves as a vehicle to further advance the initiatives/recommendations captured in the *Head Start Dental Action Plan*. The *Action Plan* was reviewed during the initial meeting of the Work Group/Coalition. Subcommittees on Access, Prevention & Education, Fluorides, Provider Training and Surveillance have been established to advance activities. The Work Group/Coalition members include the State Head Start Collaboration Office, Alaska Dental Society, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Rural Cap (Head Start Grantee with several rural Head Start Programs). Progress made on the *Head Start Dental Action Plan* included the following for the priority issues of the plan:

- The Department of Health and Social Services, Oral Health Program has applied and received HRSA funding to conduct training of Head Start staff on oral hygiene instruction, assessing Early Childhood Caries and education/promotion of water fluoridation, topical fluorides and/or fluoride supplements. The training will use the "Cavity Free Kids" curriculum developed by the Washington Dental Services Foundation.
- The Oral Health Program has worked with individual Head Start grantees to increase participation in improving oral health.
- The Oral Health Program is developing a State Fluorides Plan to increase awareness/education on role of fluoride in reduction of dental decay.
- The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and tribal programs are encouraging Medicaid enrollment and re-enrollment for Alaska Native children.
- Several classes of Primary Dental Health Aides have been trained to provide villages with dental education, toothbrush prophies and topical fluorides.
- Community Health Aides, including Dental Health Aides, are applying topical fluoride varnishes in many areas served by the tribal dental programs.
- Public Health Nursing is working on a project to list communities that dispense/prescribe fluoride supplements, to assess gaps where children lack both access to fluoridated community drinking water and fluoride supplements, and to develop a plan for distribution of fluoride supplements.
- The Oral Health Program and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium fluoride specialist are collecting fluoridation data from the state drinking water program and/or from water operators and prioritizing communities where water fluoridation can be implemented safely and effectively. A formal "Memorandum of Agreement" between the agencies will be developed in FY 2006.
- The Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) has started a hospital-based pediatric dental residency program in Anchorage in the Summer of 2005. The ANMC pediatric residency program is accepting two residents per year and is prioritizing the training of tribal dentists with commitments for specialty practices.
- A Basic Screening Survey of third-grade children was completed in the Fall of 2004. The screening project is collecting data on kindergarten children and children enrolled in Head Start in 2005. The project will survey all three groups of children again during FY 2007.
- In January 2005, another Head Start Oral Health Summit was held in Anchorage. Twenty-seven people attended representing 12 of Alaska's Head Start grantees, the federal Head Start technical assistance contractor, the state departments of Health & Social Services and Education & Early Development, Alaska Native Tribal Health, the Washington Dental Service Foundation, and the North Star Dental clinic.
- The dental officer and three grantees attended the Region XI Head Start Oral Health Forum in June 2005 for presentations and discussions on preventive approaches to reducing caries and accessing treatment services for children enrolled in Head Start/Early Head Start Programs. As a result of the dental action plan and this meeting, at least three Head Start grantees are applying for grants to expand and/or implement activities identified in the dental action plan.

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