



# Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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## **Prevent Abuse and Neglect through Dental Awareness (P.A.N.D.A.)**

Family violence (child abuse and neglect, intimate partner violence, and elder abuse and neglect) continues to exist at epidemic proportions in this country. More than three million cases of child maltreatment are reported each year, and approximately 3 million adults and an additional 3 million seniors are also abused or neglected annually. Although at least 75% of physical abuse of children, adults and the elderly involve injuries to the head, neck and mouth, less than 1% of all reports of child maltreatment are made by dental professionals. Few dentists report having received any training in recognizing abuse or neglect in patients of all ages, and virtually no training in how to deal with abuse and neglect of adults and the elderly.

The P.A.N.D.A. program is designed to create awareness in the dental and other communities, to provide information on recognition and appropriate intervention in family violence, and to prevent abuse and neglect in all populations. Full implementation of the Arkansas program was completed in 1999. Activities in the new P.A.N.D.A. coalition in Arkansas include presentations to dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, dental hygiene and dental assisting students, pediatric dental residents, physicians, teachers, day care workers, nurses, foster parents and advocacy groups. Topics in educational offerings include the history of abuse and neglect, recognition of clinical and non-clinical cases, the reporting process for child maltreatment, how to provide appropriate intervention for adult victims, and how to prevent exposure to liability.

To date, more than 10,000 individuals have attended an Arkansas P.A.N.D.A. presentation in the twelve years since the program was reinvigorated. The PANDA program has helped to increase visibility for the state oral health program and the coalition members. While Arkansas does not track the number of reports of suspected abuse and neglect made by dentists, awareness has improved based on increased inquiries from dentists to the health and human services department. Since its inception, the PANDA program has been replicated in 44 additional states and in 14 international programs.

### **Lessons Learned:**

P.A.N.D.A. has proven to be a valuable program not only to educate about family violence prevention, but also as a means for oral health programs to collaborate with diverse partners. Because the program can be accomplished for as little as \$3-5 per dental office or clinic – and corporate sponsors are ready and willing to assist, replication is easy.

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