



## Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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### The Arkansas Early Head Start/Head Start Oral Health Forums and Action Plan

The Arkansas Office of Oral Health sponsored a series of three Head Start/Early Head Start Oral Health Forums held at different locations in the state. The forums were funded by the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD) through a \$5,000 grant from HRSA Maternal and Child Health Bureau. The Oral Health Forums, based on the successful Governor's Oral Health Summit, provided communities, legislators and parents the opportunity to address oral health access for children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start.

#### The Forum Planning Process:

The core planning group included the Office of Oral Health of the Arkansas Department of Health, the Arkansas Head Start Association, the Arkansas Head Start Collaboration Project, and four of the state's Head Start agencies. Forum planning began in early June 2002. The planning group developed initial goals and a draft forum agenda. Strategies for the forums were developed in a collaborative process involving each of the planning group's agencies. The 2002 forums were held: Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> in Russellville, Nov. 19<sup>th</sup> in Batesville, and Nov. 20<sup>th</sup> in Pine Bluff. The agenda was the same for the three forums. The locations were selected to allow easy access from around the state. Registration materials were developed and mailed by the Office of Oral Health. Head Start agencies forwarded the materials to interested Head Start parents and community leaders. Registrations were processed by the Office of Oral Health in cooperation with the Arkansas Head Start Collaboration Project. The Collaboration Project served as the fiscal agent for the Forums and provided travel stipends to qualifying parents.

#### The Oral Health Forums:

Each Oral Health Forum was scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. to allow parents to attend without interfering with their children's schedules. To facilitate forum attendance by a diverse audience, forum planners decided to conduct all forums outside the major metropolitan area of Central Arkansas. Because Head Start parents may have limited resources to travel to the forums, forum invitations included application for travel stipends. To maximize input from attendees, each of the three forums was limited to no more than 30-35 attendees. A total of 54 parents, 7 speakers and 14 Head Start staff participated in the forums. The basic agenda for the three forums emphasized engaging community leaders and Head Start/Early Head Start parents. The agenda included plenary sessions for attendees, which began with welcoming remarks and introductions and followed with several presentations. The Office of Oral Health presented the state of oral health in Arkansas, by the Head Start Association presented the basics of the Head Start program, and individual local dentists and parents presented local issues and concerns. The forums included facilitated discussion sessions with all participants to identify barriers, objectives and goals to improve oral health in the Head Start population. The forums provided maximum participation from Head Start staff and parents. All attendees were asked to evaluate both the plenary and discussion portion of the forum. Overall, all attendees scored every portion of the forum as either good or excellent.

#### Action Plan:

Open discussion at each forum identified numerous barriers to optimize oral health for the Head Start population. Attendees identified potential solutions to these barriers and recommended action steps to

accomplish the goals. The results of the facilitated discussions were used to draft the Arkansas Head Start Oral Health Plan. The Office of Oral Health, with input from the Arkansas Oral Health Coalition, developed the final version of the Action Plan. The Action Plan included four goals and action steps for each goal. The goals are:

- Goal #1: Increase access to care through advocacy.
- Goal #2: Increase understanding of oral health and the role of Head Start for Head Start parents, Head Start staff members and the dental community.
- Goal #3: Increase awareness of community water fluoridation among Head Start parents and staff.
- Goal #4: Increase awareness of family violence prevention among Head Start staff and parents.

**Follow-up Activities & Outcomes:**

- (1) An outcome of the forums was a request to produce and disseminate a CD-ROM containing programs on oral health, Head Start, fluoridation, family violence prevention, and resource information. The CD-ROM was completed in the Spring 2005. The materials are included on the Arkansas Department of Health webpage at [www.aroralhealth.com](http://www.aroralhealth.com). The CD-ROM has been distributed to every Head Start center in Arkansas, to ASTDD, and to most state dental directors at their request. Based on information contained in the CD-ROM, partners have received numerous requests for more information and presentations for Head Start staff. Requests from across the country have exhausted the initial supply of 400 CD-ROMs. The Arkansas Head Start Collaboration Project and the Office of Oral Health are contributing additional funds to produce an additional 200 copies for distribution.
- (2) The recently-elected Chair of the Arkansas Oral Health Coalition, Inc. is also the Executive Director of the Arkansas Head Start Collaboration Project, Ann Patterson. As Chair of the Coalition, Ms. Patterson leads the organization in advocacy and education efforts aimed at increasing access to care and expanding population-based primary prevention initiatives statewide.

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