



## Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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### **First Smiles – A First 5 Oral Health Education and Training Program**

**First Smiles** is an oral health training and education program funded by a \$7 million contract awarded by the First 5 California Commission. The program is co-managed by the Dental Health Foundation and the California Dental Association Foundation. The 4-year statewide program, conducted from 2004-2008, aimed to prevent tooth decay in children age 0-5 years. First Smiles was developed based on the need to provide early risk assessment and dental prevention and care to young children, to improve the workforce (dental providers and non-dental healthcare providers), and to increase parent/caregiver knowledge on oral health. The program delivered provider education and training targeting medical/dental professionals and early childhood caregivers. The program also provided consumer education targeting community-based organizations that have significant early interaction with parents and caregivers of young children. A Scientific Advisory Committee, with leading experts in children's oral health, guided the development of the curriculum and training materials for providers and consumers to assure standardized key messages and use of the newest scientific information on dental disease prevention in children. First Smiles succeeded in training more than 18,800 dental/medical providers and child care staff at Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Head Start and other child care programs/facilities, exceeding all training goals except in training of dental assistants. Additionally, the program distributed over one million brochures in nine languages to caregivers throughout the State. Evaluation showed increased knowledge and skills of dental and medical providers trained through First Smiles. Outcomes included more dental providers delivering fluoride varnish to young children and discussing infant's bottle or breast feeding practices with parents; more primary care providers reporting "always or almost always" referring pregnant patients to a dentist (from 18% to 52%); and more parents wiping or brushing their children's teeth after every meal (from 14% to 21%).

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