



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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Colorado Commission on Children's Dental Health

As a result of Colorado remaining as one of two states without a dental benefit in the State Children's Health Insurance Plan (SCHIP), with less than 25% of Medicaid eligible children accessing the oral health system, and with 35% of Colorado counties without a Medicaid dental provider, the Governor supported a Commission to address the oral health crisis for children in the state. The Commission on Children's Dental Health was established and met from May to November 2000 with a charge to address five key issues: 1) Outline a dental benefit that meets the minimum oral health needs of children; 2) Identify what financial resources are needed to address the oral health needs of low-income children; 3) Characterize the systems needed to allow seamless access to oral care services; 4) Define ways to improve the delivery of dental care services; and 5) Assure optimal utilization of oral health professional and publicly funded programs. Two members of the Governor's cabinet facilitated the Commission: the Health Officer for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (the department with the Medicaid Program). The Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield Foundation provided funding for the Commission, and staffing came from the University of Colorado Center for Human Investment and Policy. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Colorado Dental Association provided meeting space. Commission members embodied a wide representation, including private/public dentists/hygienists, the Dean of the University of Colorado School of Dentistry, public health nurses, business executives, and key legislators, including the chair of the Joint Budget Committee. Members were from urban and rural parts of the state. The Commission developed nine recommendations and widely publicized its final report. In addition, the Commission provided broad support for five successful legislative initiatives funded by state tobacco settlement dollars, including 1) a state dental loan repayment program, 2) tax credit program for dentists and dental hygienists, 3) allowing dental hygienists to bill Medicaid directly, 4) funding for expansion of a dental safety net clinic, and 5) funding for a dental benefit in SCHIP.

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