



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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Fluoridation Engineer in an Oral Health Program

At Colorado's Department of Public Health and Environment, a fluoridation engineer is a member of the Oral Health Program's staff, rather than the Water Quality Division. This arrangement supports the issue that fluoridation is a public health measure rather than a water quality/environmental issue. It also allows the engineer to become familiar with oral health issues, how he/she "fits" into oral health surveillance and practice, and allows the engineer to link the Oral Health Program with the Water Quality Program by attending their staff meetings. Furthermore, this has allowed the engineer to take on other public health programs including the school fluoride mouthrinse program. The Colorado fluoridation engineer position is funded through the Preventive Health Services Block Grant. The full time position does not require an engineering degree but, rather, a college degree (or water plant experience and subsequent water fluoridation and Water Fluoridation Reporting System (WFRS) training through the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The position is classified as an Engineering/Physical Science Technician with a monthly salary range of \$2757- \$4649 with additional fringe benefits. The result of this arrangement was a fluoridation engineer who understood the oral health aspects and rationale for fluoridation and was able to function independently in community meetings and water plant operator trainings, clearly articulating the tooth decay process, the role of fluoride, and thoroughly understood the anti-fluoridationist's "adverse health" arguments and the correct responses to these issues. In the early 1990's, the Colorado Department of Health administration questioned this organizational structure. An intense cost effectiveness/efficiency study was completed by the internal auditor for the Department, comparing the potential outcomes of locating the engineer in the water quality program as a means of saving Preventive Health Block Grant Funds. The resulting white paper concluded that the fluoridation engineer in the Oral Health Section was the most cost effective and efficient arrangement for the promotion of fluoridation as a dental public health measure.

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