



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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Health Care Commission's Dental Care Access Improvement Committee

The Delaware Health Care Commission, with a purpose to promote accessible, affordable, quality health care for all Delawareans, recognized the seriousness of the access to dental care problems in both the Medicaid and general populations, and the need to bring all parties together to develop workable solutions. In the fall of 1998, the Delaware Health Care Commission formed the **Dental Care Access Improvement Committee** to study ways to improve access to dental care. The Committee reflected a cross section of professional and community interests in dental care as well as a balance of perspectives and representation from groups already examining the wide array of factors impacting dental care access in Delaware. The Committee Members included two Delaware State Senators, two members of the Delaware House of Representatives, dentists from the private sector, the State's Public Health Dental Director, as well as representatives from the Delaware Health & Human Services (Division of Public Health and Division of Social Services), Central Delaware Community Health Partnership, Delaware Healthcare Association, Western Sussex Health Coalition, Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, Christina Care Health Services, Beebe Medical Center, Delaware School Nurses Association, Higher Education Commission, Office of the Budget, Delaware Institute of Dental Education and Research, Delaware Board of Dental Examiners, Delaware State Dental Society, and Delaware Dental Hygienists' Association. The Health Care Commission (HCC) did not receive any special funding for the Committee, but did use its general operating funds to support the Committee's activities. Committee members, other than HCC staff, donated their time and efforts. The Committee's work was in two phases. Phase One was devoted to fact finding comprised of research and presentations. Phase Two was devoted to consensus building and developing recommendations. The Committee's findings and recommendations resulted in the passage of two key bills designed to improve access to care. One bill allows for the development of alternative methods for satisfying some of the requirements for dental licensure. The other bill empowers the Health Care Commission to develop innovative programs to improve access to care. The Committee and its report have increased awareness of the dental care access issues and set the stage for implementation of programs and activities for improving access to dental care.

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