

Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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“WIC Smiles 4U” Community Dental Health Prevention Program

The Florida Department of Health receives funding from the Federal Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Title V block grant. In turn, the funding is allocated to county health departments to support preventive dental health program activities in their respective communities. The Hillsborough County Health Department’s Community Dental Health program developed a pilot program to integrate oral health into total health of clients served by the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The ‘WIC Smiles 4 U’ program was created to increase access and reduce oral health disparities of women and children enrolled in WIC and to reduce the incidence of early childhood caries and subsequent need for extensive treatment. WIC is often the first contact with the health care system for many low income women, infants, and children. An online dental health education course was designed for WIC staff to build advocacy around the importance of early intervention. To promote onsite dental services to potential clients, posters and brochures were developed in Spanish and English and distributed in WIC clinics.

Preventive dental services and referrals to dental clinics were offered on site at WIC clinics. Mobile dental providers and staff received a ‘hands on’ course on providing oral risk assessment, fluoride varnish, and glass ionomer sealants (GIS) on primary teeth. Onsite dental services were coordinated on a rotating monthly basis at various WIC clinics around Hillsborough County. Dental services were contracted to local Federally Qualified Health Center’s (FQHC) mobile dental clinics. Since the program’s inception in October 2012, over 1,000 children have received sealants. The program has served over 60 onsite ‘WIC Smiles 4 U’ dental events; screened 1,200 children and infants, and 214 pregnant women; and provided 3,120 sealants. Collaboration resulted in developing a community-based oral health early intervention dental program for low socioeconomic at risk women and children. The objective of the program was to increase the proportion of children, adolescents, and adults who used the oral health care system in the past 12 months (*Healthy People 2020*).

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This demonstration project yielded a significant new access point for dental services for underserved children and women enrolled in WIC. The ‘WIC Smiles 4 U’ increased awareness of the importance of oral health to overall health and well-being. The program helped to increase acceptance and adoption of effective early preventive interventions. The WIC Smiles 4 U program successfully linked WIC participants and local public health dental resources through referral and networking.

Lessons Learned:

- Market onsite dental preventive services onsite at WIC clinics to build public recognition.
- Incorporate dental health education courses in WIC curriculum.
- Develop annual training sessions for mobile dental providers.

- Engage WIC administration and staff to assist clients to make dental appointments and collect consent forms.
- Collect data for surveillance of dental disease rates.
- Create opportunities for accepting 'walk ins' on day of event.
- Provide clients with resource guides (Spanish and English) listing area dental clinics.
- Provide guidance to parents on how to obtain Florida Kidcare coverage for their children.
- Develop a system to handle 'warm' referrals for clients needing urgent dental care.
- Utilize the versatility of bilingual mobile dental coach driver, assistants and dental providers.

Plans for improvement:

- Develop Basic Screening Surveillance (BSS) training for dental providers.
- Implement BSS website tool for dental providers to input surveillance data onsite.
- Incorporate overview of the 'WIC Smiles 4 U' into new hire training for WIC staff.
- Create an incentive/recognition program of WIC staff to publicly recognize outstanding performance in support of dental health events.
- Develop metrics to track management practices to improve the program; i.e., # of appointments, percentage of appointments kept, percentage of follow up, outcomes assessments of sealant retention, and reductions in tooth decay.

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