



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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Saving the Dental Program: Georgia's Experience and Support of the Oral Health Coalition

The Georgia State Oral Health Program has twice in the last seven years (1996 and 2000) faced the threat of elimination with severe budget cuts of state funding for oral health. In response to the threat in 1996, the Georgia Oral Health Coalition (GOHC) was established to build and support state oral health infrastructure. The Coalition worked diligently in 1996 and 2000 to represent the need for the state's oral health program and necessary dental services. The Coalition, along with the Georgia Department of Audits (GDOA) Report, recommended that the state's oral health program remains intact and that the state expands oral health services. A one-page fact sheet was developed to promote retaining the state dental program, referring to the GDOA Report's recommendation to maintain and expand state oral health services, the oral health needs of the state, and the recommendation to maintain the state funding for the oral health program at the present funding level. All organizations/individuals of the Coalition utilized the fact sheet. In addition, consumers, city and county politicians, local boards of health, private dentists, professional health organizations and advocacy groups sent letters and made calls to the Governor and the Department of Human Resources Commissioner. All work performed was by voluntary members and associations, and there were no direct costs. As a result of this effort, the state oral health program was retained and funding reinstated both in 1997 and 2001. The efforts of the GOHC in raising the importance of the state's oral health infrastructure has also led to other benefits including developing a state oral health plan, funding the school-based Georgia Oral Health Prevention Program, and significant increases in dental Medicaid fees.

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