



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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DIAGNOdent Oral Health Screening Project 2004-2005

In 2004, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), Kansas school nurses, and public health department nurses began working together on an oral health screening project using DIAGNOdent to assess the oral health of Kansas school children. A DIAGNOdent is a non-invasive laser dental device that screens for decay in children's teeth. The project entailed training nurses in using a DIAGNOdent to screen and assess the oral health of school-age children. The objectives of the project were to promote oral health and prevention of tooth decay, to identify children with dental problems early and refer them for professional dental care, and to aid in the collection of data to help determine the oral health status of the student population in Kansas. The project was made possible through a \$200,000 grant received from the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund for Kansas children. Training sessions were offered in six locations in the state. Participants learned the relationship between oral health and general health; that dental caries is an infectious and transmissible disease; how to develop strategies to encourage community partnerships to address dental care issues; and instruction on DIAGNOdent equipment. Twenty-five nurses received DIAGNOdent training the first year and subsequently screened 2,000 children. Children needing dental treatment were referred to local dentists and the nurses acted as case managers to ensure follow-up treatment was received. More than 80 nurses were trained the second year. Student screenings were concluded in May 2005. KDHE expects approximately 4,000 children statewide to receive a dental screening through the project. In addition, the project is helping to promote awareness and direct children in need of dental treatment to community providers. A formal review of the effectiveness of the DIAGNOdent as an oral screening device will be evaluated when the grant concludes.

Reference:

Bader JD, Shugars DA. A systematic review of the performance of a laser fluorescence device for detecting caries. *J Am Dent Assn* 2004; 135;1413-26.

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