



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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Oral Health: Building Public Awareness and Support

Policymakers, key decision-makers, and community leaders must recognize children's oral health as a key component of school readiness rather than just a cosmetic or self-esteem issue. Fundamentally, there is a need to reframe the messages about children's oral health and link it clearly to learning. To address the issue of public awareness about children's oral health, Kansas Action For Children (www.kac.org) is engaging in a comprehensive public awareness and engagement campaign. The two-year campaign started in 2004. Accomplishment of the campaign included the following:

- A comprehensive media campaign was launched to increase awareness of children's oral health issues. The media campaign relied primarily on television advertisements developed by MB Piland Advertising & Marketing. Approximately \$125,000 was spent on advertisements placed in the Topeka, Wichita and Kansas City markets. In addition, \$6,000 was spent on public radio announcements.
- The Web domain www.yourmouthmatters.org has been set up to advocate the importance of good dental health in the overall health of a child. The Web site provide facts related to dental health including how it is directly linked to success in school, how certain readily-available foods and beverages contribute to the problem, and how simple prevention strategies and healthy food options can foster good oral health.
- Kansas Action For Children targeted the print media by strategically placing letters to the editor submitted by effective oral health messengers. Articles are also being submitted to association newsletters/journals. The focus of the editorials and/or letters is to promote awareness of children's oral health issues.
- A series of direct mail postcards, costing \$10,000, have been developed to complement the television media by providing more specific information about a range of oral health issues: [Healthy Kids Healthy Kansas](#), [Healthy Options Encourage Oral Health](#), and [Support Healthy Options in Schools](#). The postcards are targeted to policymakers, influentials, and frequent voters.
- An oral health "growth chart" detailing the developmental milestones for oral health care has been provided to pediatricians, family practitioners, school nurses, and child care providers for distribution to families with children. This project cost \$4,000.

In year two (2006), the campaign will prepare two public policy briefs and one special report. If additional resources are secured, more television time for TV commercials will be purchased. This comprehensive media campaign was made possible with the support of the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, Delta Dental Foundation of Kansas, Kansas Department of Health & Environment, and Kansas Dental Charitable Foundation. The total project cost is \$200,000, including creative development, focus group testing, and staff time.

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