



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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Kansas Early Childhood Action Plan

In Kansas, Head Start programs continue to report challenges in securing dental care for their enrolled children. On December 6, 2002, the Kansas Head Start Association (KHSa) conducted the Kansas Early Childhood Oral Health Forum. The Forum was co-sponsored and funded by the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors (ASTDD), the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Kansas Head Start Collaboration Office. A HRSA/ASTDD grant provided \$5,000, Kansas Department of Health and Environment contributed \$2,000, and the Head Start Collaboration Project gave \$1,500 to support the Forum. Sixty participants, including dentists, dental hygienists, pediatricians, Head Start staff, parents, policymakers and funders from throughout Kansas, attended the Forum. The cost of the Forum totaled approximately \$8,000 (included conducting a survey of Head Start programs, the services of a facilitator, supplies and postage). The purpose of the Forum was to develop an action plan, including recommended strategies and roles for key players, for addressing the oral health needs of young children in Kansas and with specific attention to Head Start children. The Forum started with a review of the Surgeon General's "Call to Action" and of the recent survey results of the state's Head Start programs on oral health needs. At the Forum, participants formed three task forces and each task force identified priority strategies in the areas of (1) Access, (2) Policy and Financing, and (3) Prevention and Education. Based on input from the Forum, the planning committee (15 members representing key stakeholder agencies and organizations including parents) drafted the *Kansas Early Childhood Action Plan*, which included long-term and short-term outcomes with Head Start-specific actions. Follow-up steps to the Forum included: (1) Distribution of Forum summary and action plan to all participants; (2) Shared leadership by creating a statewide oral health coalition; (3) Meetings of the three strategic task forces to follow up on the action plans; (4) Specific efforts within KHSa to implement Head Start-specific actions identified in the plan; (5) Planning for a second forum to review the work of the coalition and task forces.

The *Action Plan* included the following targeted outcomes for Head Start:

ACCESS

- Local access systems are developed in targeted communities.
- Head Start programs expand their case management capacity to increase access.

POLICY AND FINANCING

- Head Start programs understand the implications of the Practice Act and begin using dental hygienists in their expanded roles.
- Head Start grantees participate actively as Medicaid providers.

PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

- Staff and parents in Head Start and child care programs receive consistent, user-friendly information about good oral hygiene practices and oral hygiene supplies to support these practices.
- An increased number of Head Start programs incorporate fluoride varnish in their oral health practices.

The primary challenge in implementing the Kansas Early Childhood Action Plan is having adequate resources. ASTDD has provided follow-up funding to support the continuation of the strategies developed at the Forum. Outcomes of the Action Plan included the following initiatives and projects to improve oral health of young children and to increase access to oral health care services:

- **Early Head Start Oral Health Initiative.** The project was designed to strengthen the oral health service system in each Kansas Early Head Start (EHS) program. The initiative provided staff and parent education, regular screenings with fluoride varnish applications, recruitment of additional dentists and dental hygienists, and evaluation to track results. Seventy-five percent of parents learned to screen their own children's teeth using the "Lift the Lip" technique. Eleven of 12 participating EHS programs enlisted community dentists to see children by the age of one.
- **Teeth for Two: Pregnancy and Oral Health Initiative.** The project, an expansion of the EHS Oral Health Initiative, has the goal of increasing the number of pregnant women receiving a dental examination and a professional dental cleaning. With funding from Delta Dental Plan of Kansas Foundation, KHSA has produced a 7-module curriculum, a *Teeth for Two* flip chart, and a brochure. The project has the capacity to reach 25,000 pregnant women in a 12-month period.
- **Breaking the Chain of Dental Decay: Nutrition and Oral Health.** This project is in partnership with Kansas Association of Community Action Programs and is funded by the Kansas Community Food and Nutrition Program. Consumer education materials will be distributed showing the link between nutrition and oral health, and 6 workshops provided for health care/child care providers.
- **Oral Health Services for Children with Special Health Care Needs.** An American Academy of Pediatrics planning grant is giving KHSA and its partners the opportunity to increase the quality of oral health services and the prevention of early childhood caries in children with special health care needs (CSHCN). The planning process will address: (a) community assets and needs, and (b) professional development and continuing education for health and oral health care providers.
- **Oral Health Kansas (OHK).** The Action Plan led to establishing the OHK, a statewide coalition focusing on advocacy, public awareness and education. KHSA supported the development of an *Early Childhood Oral Health Work Group*, as an extension of the coalition.
- **Extended Care Permits for Dental Hygienists.** The Kansas legislature passed a change in the state's dental practice act, which permits registered dental hygienists to establish community-based hygiene services.

Contact Person(s) for Inquiries:

Mary Baskett, Kansas Head Start Association, 22521 West 53rd Terrace, Shawnee, KS 66226, Phone: 913-422-1700, Fax: 913-422-5002, Email: khsa@kc.rr.com

Marcia Manter, Early Head Start Oral Health Coordinator, Kansas Head Start Association, 9247 Twilight Lane, Lenexa, KS 66219, Phone: 913-894-6843, Email: mmanter@oralhealthkansas.org