Louisiana’s Oral Health Summit

On December 6, 2002, the Louisiana Oral Health Program coordinated the first statewide summit on oral health. The Oral Health Summit was sponsored with grant monies from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and HRSA’s Maternal and Child Health Bureau through cooperative agreements with the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors. Additional sponsors included Oral Health America, Procter and Gamble, Patterson Dental, the Louisiana Dental Association, Louisiana Dental Services, Oral B, Agenda for Children, Head Start Association, the LA Head Start Collaboration Project, Department of Social Services, LSUHSC Foundation, and the LSUHSC School of Dentistry. The Summit was designed to assemble dental health leaders and policy makers to address access and barriers to dental care, infrastructure strengths and weaknesses, educational needs, and the financing of oral health care in Louisiana. Over 125 participants attended the summit. Participants learned about oral health among various populations and then formed five workgroups: (1) Financing Dental Services/Medicaid Policy and Administration, (2) Dental Education/Consumer Education, (3) Early Head Start/Head Start, (4) Prevention/Community Water Fluoridation, and (5) Communication & Understanding among Stakeholders and Advocacy. The task of each workgroup was to identify “where we are” by focusing on barriers and resources; “where we want to be” by focusing on what we want to achieve/accomplish; and “how do we get there” by focusing on strategies that can be pursued.

Lessons Learned:

The cost of the Summit was very expensive, approximately $13,000.

The evaluation of the Summit was overwhelmingly excellent. Respondents clearly indicated a new level of awareness about the status of oral health in Louisiana and a willingness to help address the issues preventing access to oral health services for the residents of Louisiana.

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