



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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Coalition Building for the Development of Community Based Oral Health Initiatives

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), Office of Oral Health assists communities statewide in efforts aimed at increasing access to oral health education, preventive and treatment services. Upon meeting with advocates from various communities, the OOH noted the existence of two common shortfalls existing in *each* community. The first was the lack of *oral health expertise* needed to develop such a plan; and the second was the lack of a *representative group* of community residents. In response to this observation, the OOH developed a protocol for assisting cities and towns in the development of community-based oral health coalitions. OOH staff meets with community representatives to identify *initial* community concerns, and then assists community members in establishing the infrastructure for the coalition. Once the initial problems have been determined, other potential community resources and stakeholders are recognized before an action plan is developed. The Office of Oral Health assumes all costs associated with its role as a facilitator of coalition development. Activities among the various community coalitions are made possible through various national, state and local funding streams. Through the development of community-based health and oral health coalitions, oral health initiatives have been established in three major cities as well as several smaller communities. The outcomes observed in these communities include marked increases in: 1) treatment services through the development of community based dental clinics; 2) school-based education and preventive fluoride mouth rinse and dental sealant programs; 3) school-linked education and preventive dental sealant programs; 4) community water fluoridation efforts; 5) school-based injury prevention programs; 6) oral cancer screenings for high-risk groups; 7) education, and prevention programs for seniors and elders; and 8) overall community based oral health education for all residents.

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