

Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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Missouri Preventive Services Program

The Missouri Oral Health Preventive Services Program (PSP) is a community-driven, systematic approach to population-based prevention of oral disease. The goal of the program is to assess the oral health status of children throughout the state while providing a public health preventive intervention that could dramatically reduce decay in communities. The program involves local dentists and dental hygienists conducting an oral screening annually on as many children in the community as possible, accompanied by oral health education, toothbrushes and toothpaste, application of fluoride varnish twice a year, and referral for necessary dental work to local clinicians. The Department of Health and Senior Services provides the fluoride varnish supplies and local dental professionals supply the manpower to accomplish this community-based approach to prevention of decay.

The PSP has a Program Manager and five dental hygienists that function as Oral Health Consultants (OHC). The OHCs are the core of the program, they locate the schools, work with the school districts and the school nurses. They assist with the recruitment of volunteers from the dental community and direct them to schools/school nurses in need of oral screening volunteers. OHC are responsible for assuring that the dentists and dental hygienists have completed the online oral screening calibration. Also, the OHC confirms the volunteers applying the fluoride varnish to the children's teeth have completed the online fluoride varnish application training. The OHC also coordinates the ordering and delivery of supplies and the return of the screening forms to the Office of Dental Health and assists the PSP coordinator with any questions. This program depends on volunteers from the dental community and volunteers from the local community to function. The program relies heavily on the school nurses and depends on their cooperation for successful events. The school nurses are responsible for scheduling the two events.

The PSP is highly successful and is accepted and requested by many communities. Starting in 2009 PSP provided services to 32,000 children and has grown to 92,689 children in 2016-17 school year. The program provides services in all but 5 of the 115 counties in Missouri. The program works with elementary schools, Head Start programs, early childhood learning centers and Missouri state Schools for the Severely Disabled. One noticeable outcome of this program is that during the 2014 school year third graders with untreated decay was 26.1% and in the 2017 school year the untreated decay rate for the third graders was 21.5%. This positive change is probably not due just to the PSP as many factors are linked to this outcome however, this change is important to note. The link to the full annual report is: <http://health.mo.gov/blogs/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/psp-report.pdf>

Lessons Learned:

- Work closely with the State School Nurse Association. Communication from the State School Nurse Director to the individual school nurses helps with acceptance of the program
- Be constantly aware of the funding for the program. Keep the value of the program in front of policymakers.
- In the bidding process for supplies, try to get the best tasting fluoride varnish you can. If it tastes bad children won't come back for the second application in 6 months
- Select Oral Health Consultants that have a passion for this type of work.

- Promote the program through the dental and dental hygiene societies; they are the source of your volunteers.
- Providing mailing supplies to the school nurses helps them get the screening forms back to the office.

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