



Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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New Jersey Department of Health Children's Oral Health Education Program

The New Jersey Department of Health established the New Jersey Children's Oral Health Education Program in 1981 and is regionally implemented in the twenty-one counties of the State. The Program provides a variety of interactive, age-appropriate oral health education activities for children in grades pre-K through 12.

Educational activities cover a variety of oral health issues including, but not limited to, good oral health and hygiene practices, fluoride as a preventive measure for tooth decay, dental sealants, healthy food choices, periodontal disease, tobacco cessation, and oral injury prevention. Classroom presentations include interactive discussion, audio-visual materials, and student participation. All Program activities can be adapted for a special needs audience.

To address the importance of good oral health practices, education programs have been developed that target pregnant women through initiatives such as "Project: REACH," (Reducing Early Childhood Caries Through Outreach and Access to Care).

In addition, "Be a Smart Mouth" Home Visiting and Oral Health Perfect Together was developed for the New Jersey Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program and implemented to address the importance of good oral health practices to first time families in the State.

The Children's Oral Health Education Program also provides in-service or workshop programs to non-dental professionals, including school nurses, public health nurses, teachers, WIC Coordinators, and social workers. During the 2015-2016 school year, over 80,000 students, staff, health care providers and consumers in high need/high risk areas of the State received oral health/hygiene instruction and oral health personal care resources.

Lessons Learned:

The Children's Oral Health Education Program has been in existence for over 35 years and continues to provide oral health education and resources to school-age children in high need/high risk areas of the State. In addition, in efforts to address trends in oral health, education programs targeting first time families in the State through Given the long-term history of the Program, numerous oral health education activities developed and implemented, there are no plans to implement changes to a well-established successful program.

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