

Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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New Jersey Department of Health Women, Infant Children (WIC) Oral Health Education Activity

The New Jersey Department of Health Children's Oral Health Education Program provides oral health education to Women, Infant Children (WIC) agency staff and WIC clients. Education to WIC participants (expectant women and children under age 5) is conducted by registered dental hygiene staff. Education programs take place in group and individual sessions. A variety of oral health topics are addressed including: prevention of early childhood caries, healthy food choice selection, reduced consumption of sugary beverages, importance of reading food labels, fluoride supplementation if recommended by the child's pediatrician or dentist, and importance of regular dental check-ups. Clients receive a toothbrush to encourage daily home care. Pregnant women and new families are provided with infant tooth tender and instruction on cleaning infant gums and baby teeth. Clients are educated about the importance of the first dental visit for children by age 1, association between periodontal disease and poor birth outcomes and the transmission of decay-causing bacteria through saliva-sharing behaviors. Educator staff use the New Jersey Dental Clinic Directory, "Dial a Smile" to assist WIC participants to secure a dental home if needed. The New Jersey Dental Clinic Directory is also made available at each WIC site for staff to use to assist WIC clients in securing dental clinic services.

Oral health training for WIC staff is offered periodically at individual WIC program sites. Trainings for WIC staff members include good oral hygiene practices, healthy food choice selection, reduction of the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, use of fluoridated toothpaste, link between oral and systemic health, and dangers of oral piercing. Educational posters about early childhood caries and dental health care during pregnancy information sheets in English and Spanish are provided.

In 2006 and continuing on a yearly basis, the Children's Oral Health Education Program developed and distributed an oral health newsletter, "Oral Health Facts for Women, Infants and Children" to WIC Coordinators at all State sites. Recent newsletters have covered topics such as: impact of saliva-sharing behaviors on oral health, resources for connecting WIC clients with a dental home, effects of soft and sports drinks on oral health, fluoride varnish, the use of xylitol in the prevention of decay, and the association between periodontal disease and negative birth outcomes.

There are minimal costs associated with this activity. The "Oral Health Facts for Women, Infants and Children" newsletter is printed in color, and two sided on paper for an approximate cost of \$.14 cents per newsletter.

Lessons Learned:

The preparation and Statewide distribution of the "Oral Health Facts for Women, Infants and Children" newsletter has been in existence for eleven years. It is a successful opportunity to educate and promote the importance of good oral health practices for clients served at Statewide WIC sites.

- The preparation and distribution of an annual newsletter is a low-cost way to enable NJ Children's Oral Health Education Program staff to provide an annual reminder to WIC program staff regarding the importance of addressing oral health with clients.

- Identify a contact person at each WIC site for coordination and scheduling of training/education sessions.
- Client education sessions are best scheduled on days when the largest number of WIC clients are expected in the center.

Education sessions for WIC staff are best scheduled during in-service training days to ensure staff members are able to participate.

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