



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

Practice Number: 34004
Submitted By: Office of Oral Health, New Mexico Department of Health
Submission Date: January 2005
Last Updated: June 2008

New Mexico's Second Oral Health Access Summit

New Mexico's Second Oral Health Access Summit was convened on April 25-26, 2002. More than 115 individuals participated. The Summit developed the following goals/priorities:

- **FINANCE AND LEGISLATION** – (1) maintain Medicaid dental coverage/benefits and expand eligibility for dental services; (2) expand New Mexico Department of Health professional community contracts for dental services; (3) increase dental education & incentive programs.
- **BORDER HEALTH SESSION** – (1) increase educational efforts; (2) increase availability of mobile dental units for remote underserved areas; (3) promote "Train the Trainer" programs to maximize utilization of auxiliary health care givers; (4) enhance recruitment of dental providers by ensuring adequate compensation; and (5) design strategies that would stimulate retention of dental providers.
- **PREVENTION** – (1) for fluoridation, ask legislature for funding help communities by allocating/disbursing capital improvement monies and provide educational information for parents and legislators; (2) develop a Speakers' Bureau to work with communities considering fluoridation and to provide information, education and support; (3) develop a fluoride varnish program.
- **WORKFORCE/SYSTEM CAPACITY** – (1) fund and amend New Mexico Health Service Corps to include dentists and hygienists; (2) develop proposal for revision of the New Mexico loan repayment program calendar and funding cycles; (3) pursue the HRSA model of priority assessment for assignment of health providers; (4) work with HRSA to revise regulations governing the conditions and restrictions on repayment; (5) establish residency program and link program with rural mentor/preceptor network.
- **ORAL HEALTH PLAN** – (1) change perceptions to assure oral health is integral to overall health; (2) build oral health infrastructure that meets the needs of all New Mexicans and integrates oral health effectively into overall health; (3) use collaborative partnerships to improve oral health; (4) remove access barriers between people and oral health services; (5) accelerate building of science and evidence base and apply science effectively to improve oral health.

Benefits attributed to the Summit include the following: (a) The legislature increased funding for the New Mexico Department of Health professional community contracts for dental services by \$300,000; (b) An Early Childhood Caries program is being developed by the Office of Oral Health; (c) A statewide Oral Health / Head Start Forum was held to develop partnerships; (d) Legislation was amended in 2003 to allow dental and dental hygiene students to become eligible for New Mexico Health Service Corps program, which place and supports health professionals in rural and medically underserved areas; (e) A state oral health surveillance system is being developed; and (f) An oral health council was appointed by Executive Order and directed to make recommendations regarding building a new dental school.

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