



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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Survey on Dental Access for People with Mental Retardation and Other Developmental Disabilities in the Western Region of North Carolina

In North Carolina, anecdotal information have for many years accounted difficulties in obtaining dental care for people with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities (MR/DD) who live in the community. The 2001 Human Services Research Institute report, *Today's Choice: Tomorrow's Path*, concluded that "dental care in North Carolina remains the number one health care concern for people with developmental disabilities". Additionally, the 2005 North Carolina Oral Health Summit and the 2006 Special Care Dentistry Workgroup identified access to dental care for people with MR/DD as an important statewide health issue. To obtain regional data about access to dental care in the western part of the state, a survey was conducted in 2003 by the Consortium for the Development of Community Supports. A survey questionnaire was mailed to 668 public and private residential providers, day programs, schools, and families to provide information on the oral health and dental needs of individuals with MR/DD living in the community. The survey findings showed high unmet needs among the people with MR/DD living in the community and documented barriers to accessing dental care for this special needs population. The survey findings also guided the development of recommendations to improve access to care. Based on the survey's findings and recommendations, J. Iverson Riddle Developmental Center, a residential facility for people with MM/DD with an existing dental program serving its residents, established a new outpatient dental clinic to treat persons with MR/DD living in the community. The new outpatient dental clinic began treating patients in January 2006.

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