

# Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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## **North Dakota Oral Health Coalition and North Dakota Department of Health Sponsored Conference**

North Dakota recently published a document which contains both a burden document of oral disease and a plan for the future to improve oral health. This document was a coordinated effort by the North Dakota Oral Health Coalition and the North Dakota Department of Health. The document described the prevalence of oral disease and the promotion of oral health in the State of North Dakota. The North Dakota Oral Health Coalition and North Dakota Department of Health sponsored an Oral Health Conference to unveil the document. These two partners felt that a conference would be an excellent way educate and inform the citizens of North Dakota about oral disease and its prevalence in the state. The Oral Health Conference was held on September 29, 2006 in Mandan, North Dakota. More than 100 people attended the Oral Health Conference and came together to learn about creative ways to improve the oral health status of all North Dakota residents. The attendees were from many agencies and organizations and included pediatricians, nurses, physicians, public health employees, and citizens concerned about oral health.

The theme of the conference was “The Effects of Oral Health on Total Health” educating the audience on the importance of oral health and how oral disease affects the total well-being of people in all ages. The conference started with the North Dakota State Health Officer giving the welcome speech. Additional presentations provided information on the oral health status in North Dakota, oral health’s impact on total health, and dental care for the blind, the aged and the disabled.

An important message throughout the one-day conference was that all participants in the conference are part of the puzzle to improve the oral health for the state. The conference emphasized that each partner, stakeholder and individual holds a piece of the puzzle and that they can accomplish great things by putting the pieces of the puzzle together. Each participant received a charm in the shape of a puzzle piece reminding him/her of the importance of partnership and that their expertise is needed to develop creative strategies to improve the health of the state’s residents. The conference challenged each participant to engage in partnerships, collaborative work, and/or coalitions for oral health, by completing and signing a North Dakota Oral Health Coalition’s commitment to action form. The form asks at what level of involvement would the participant like to have with the Coalition (e.g., join as an individual, join as a representative of an agency/organization, be on the Coalition’s email list, or want more information on the Coalition). The action form also asks what the participant will commit to do in the next 30 days to support the Oral Health Vision Priorities identified in the Oral Health Plan for the Future.

The purpose of the document was to help raise awareness of the need for monitoring the oral health burden in North Dakota, guide efforts to prevent and treat oral diseases and enhance the quality of North Dakota’s residents.

### **Lessons Learned:**

The conference was a great success, many people were in attendance. The majority of the people were dental professionals; we would have liked to have a greater participation from the Medical community. We are in the process of updating this document with an emphasis on integrating medical and dental.

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