



## Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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### South Carolina Oral Health Summit

On April 26-27, 2001, South Carolina conducted a summit conference on oral health, "Breaking Barriers: Access to Oral Health." The purpose of the summit was to promote awareness about oral health, discuss barriers to dental health, highlight successful dental programs, identify solutions, and build support for strategies to improve oral health and increase access to dental health services in South Carolina. The conference brought together decision-makers from state agencies, university medical and dental programs, advocacy groups, oral health practitioners and other health care professionals. In addition to the federal Health Resources and Services Administration, seven key health stakeholders in the state were summit sponsors: SC Dental Association, SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), SC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), SC Primary Health Care Association, SC Healthy Schools Children's Oral Health Coalition, and Midlands Area Health Education Center. State agency representatives attending the summit included professional and administrative staff for the SC Departments of Health and Environmental Control, Health and Human Services, Disabilities and Special Needs, Education, and Juvenile Justice. The University of South Carolina, Medical University of South Carolina, and dental hygiene education programs from six area technical colleges were well represented. The SC Dental Association and SC Dental Hygienist Associations were active participants in the summit. A Planning Committee, including agency, dental professional, and child health advocacy members, facilitated the planning, organization, and implementation of the summit. Columbia was selected to be the summit site, due to its central geographic location and easily accessibility from all areas. The summit gave much needed visibility and support from federal and state agencies and organizations for improving oral health in South Carolina. The summit provided a keynote address, a panel discussion, presentations, and reports on various aspects of oral health and on state/local efforts. Participants also joined one of four concurrent discussions: (1) Workforce Development, (2) Education, (3) Cultural Diversity, and (4) Children with Special Health Care Needs. Each group discussed barriers related to their specific topic that are associated with limiting access to oral health and reported their major issues to all summit participants. The summit was most successful in achieving the stated purpose of providing a forum to promote awareness about oral health, discuss barriers to access, highlight successful community dental programs, and build support for strategies to improve oral health in South Carolina. The \$9,000 cost of the two-day summit was covered by the HRSA/ASTDD funding, as well as contributions from the SC Dental Association, the SC Head Start Collaborative Office, and the Healthy Schools Children's Oral Health Coalition. SC AHEC provided continuing education credits. The summit report is available on the Web at <http://www.astdd.org/summitreports/SouthCarolina.pdf>. A one-day follow-up summit was held November 30, 2001 to identify specific legislative and policy agenda items for 2002. As a result of this activity, guidelines were developed and approved for the DHEC school dental prevention program establishing a process for developing public/private partnerships to provide school based oral health services to students. The school program was initiated in February of 2002. Oral health providers have enrolled in the program and a school dental program advisory committee was formed in 2003 to further these partnerships and to address oral health needs of the communities.

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#### Contact Person(s) for Inquiries:

Walter Waddell, MSW, Community Program Coordinator, Oral Health Division, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, 1751 Calhoun Street, Columbia, SC 29201, Phone: 803-898-0824, Fax: 803-898-2065, Email: [waddelwe@dhec.sc.gov](mailto:waddelwe@dhec.sc.gov)

Christine Veschusio, RDH, MA, Acting Director, Oral Health Division, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, 1751 Calhoun Street, Columbia, SC 29201, Phone: 803-898-0807, Fax: 803-898-2065, Email: [veschucn@dhec.sc.gov](mailto:veschucn@dhec.sc.gov)