



Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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Washington State's Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) Program

The Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) Program focuses on preventive and restorative dental care for Medicaid-eligible children from birth to age six, with emphasis on enrollment by age one. It is based upon the premise that starting dental visits early will yield positive behaviors by both parents and children, thereby helping to control the caries process and reduce the need for costly future restorative work. Education is at the heart of the ABCD program. Training for both the dental community and the target population provides the foundation for long-term changes in the oral health of the community. The ABCD Program is a cooperative venture of government and private entities. Partners include: Washington State's Department of Social and Health Services/Health and Recovery Services Administration, Department of Health, University of Washington School of Dentistry, Washington State Dental Association, Washington Dental Service Foundation, local dental societies, and local health jurisdictions. There are now ABCD programs in 31 of Washington State's 39 counties. Statewide Medicaid utilization data shows significant increases in access for very young children in the years since ABCD began. Access to care for Medicaid-enrolled children under age six has increased from 21% in FY 1997 to 39% in FY 2008. For children under age two, nearly 19% now receive Medicaid dental care as compared with 3% during FY 1997. For the youngest patients (children before their first birthday, when prevention is most cost-effective) access to Medicaid dental care has increased from less than 1% during FY 1997 to 8% in FY 2008. The number of providers billing for treatment of Medicaid patients under age two has increased from 484 in FY 2003 to 649 in FY 2008. More than 1,200 dentists statewide have been trained in early pediatric techniques through the ABCD program. The success of ABCD has supported the involvement of primary care medical providers in addressing the oral health of young children during well-child checkups and creates a strong referral resource. Medicaid reimburses trained and certified primary care medical providers in Washington for delivering oral screenings, health education and fluoride varnish during well-child checks.

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