



## Dental Public Health Activities Descriptive Summaries

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### West Virginia University Childhood Oral Health Project

The West Virginia University (WVU) Childhood Oral Health Project (COHP), with a total funding of \$200,000 from the Benedum Foundation for 2006-2009, began as a three year planning grant, but quickly evolved into a planning and implementation project. The project is administered by the WVU Office of Rural Health with support from the WVU School of Dentistry. The goal of the project is to increase the responsiveness of the WVU Health Sciences Center (HSC) to address issues related to childhood oral health. In West Virginia, tooth decay index is higher than the national average with 59% of WV school-aged children having experienced tooth decay. In addition, only 36% of WV children covered by Medicaid are receiving dental services. To address these disparities, strategies were specifically crafted that included: (a) evaluating and modifying the curriculum of the Schools of Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacy at WVU HSC to include oral health content (didactic and clinical training); (b) developing a continuing education course for the existing dental workforce to promote best practice guidelines related to infant and toddler oral health care (First Smiles Continuing Education) and perinatal oral health; and (c) crafting and implementing advocacy actions to inform policy makers on issues (such as Medicaid reimbursement rates, provider shortages, a student loan repayment program to increase the dental workforce, and the application of fluoride varnish by non-dental providers). COHP has institutionalized the most current evidence-based protocols and best practice guidelines within the Schools of Dentistry, Medicine and Nursing; accelerated the science base transfer to State maternal child health programs; and advocated for oral health legislation. COHP will extend to July 2010 and will continue to implement the strategies of the project's action plan.

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