



Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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Oral Health Disparities Collaborative

The Oral Health Disparities Collaborative (OHDC) was launched in order to improve access to oral health services for low-income individuals in two target populations: children ages 0 to 5 and pregnant women. The traditional paradigm of surgical treatment of caries and periodontal disease has historically utilized the majority of resources, rather than a focus on preventive care. In addition, while physicians are in good position to identify dental problems and refer patients for appropriate services, few do, as dental care is often seen as a separate, stand-alone healthcare entity. With the recognition that caries and periodontal disease are in fact chronic diseases, improved outcomes should be achievable using a collaborative methodology focused specifically on oral health. The OHDC used the Chronic Care Model as the framework for delivery system redesign. Additionally, emphasis was placed on enhancing practice and office efficiencies to support improved access and outcomes in the targeted populations, as well as encouraging the integration of dental and medical services to make oral health a part of comprehensive primary care. Through the Collaborative, access for the two target populations not typically seen in dental clinics has been created, practices have successfully applied techniques to maximize operational efficiencies, the foundation for fiscal sustainability has been laid, and a critical paradigm shift from episodic, end-stage surgical care to a chronic disease prevention and management approach in dental practice has been achieved.

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