



# Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

---

**Practice Number:** 38005  
**Submitted By:** The Nisonger Center, Ohio State University  
**Submission Date:** March 2007  
**Last Updated:** November 2011

## **The Nisonger Center Dental Program – Training of Dental Professional Students to Serve Persons with Disabilities**

The Nisonger Center Dental Program, located on the health sciences campus of the Ohio State University (OSU) but separate from the College of Dentistry, has been in existence since 1972. The Nisonger Center is a University Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), part of a network of programs linked through the Association of University Centers on Disabilities ([www.AUCD.org](http://www.AUCD.org)). The Center utilizes an interdisciplinary approach to training and providing services to children and adults with disabilities and their families.

The annual budget is approximately \$460,000 (the majority is used for staff salaries). The support of the OSU College of Dentistry and Nationwide Children's Hospital Dental Clinic makes it possible for the students/residents to receive training at the Nisonger Center in an interdisciplinary service delivery setting. The focus of the Program is training through service.

Each year approximately 100 fourth year dental students, 35 dental hygiene students, 7 second year pediatric dental residents, and 9 General Practice Residency/Advanced Education in General Dentistry (GPR/AEGD) residents rotate through the program. During their rotations, the students/residents receive clinical experience/training and didactic education regarding various aspects of developmental disabilities related to children and adults. Most patients treated at the Nisonger Center Dental Program are healthy medically and are at the moderate level of mental retardation. Students provide dental care in a dental office like setting with a focus on behavioral management techniques. No general anesthesia is given and minimal sedation experience is provided through the rotations. The training is intended to demonstrate that the vast majority of patients with developmental disabilities can be treated in a routine manner and require no special equipment or techniques. This training experience provides future dental health practitioners with first-hand exposure to a special segment of the population, helps to form their perceptions regarding their capability to provide dental health care for people with disabilities, and shape their future clinical practices.

### **Lessons Learned:**

1. Students at all levels must be taught to understand the mitigating factors associated with disabilities that affect oral health.
2. Conversely, students must also be taught the case management and care coordination techniques, community resources, and complementary home health services that persons with special needs enjoy.
3. Students need to learn and utilize the wealth of community-based care management resources that are available to persons with disabilities and which can improve access and compliance.

---

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

Diego Solis, DDS, Interim Director  
The Nisonger Center Dental Program  
The Nisonger Center  
Ohio State University  
1581 Dodd Drive  
Columbus, OH 43210

614/292-3160  
614-292-6291 (FAX)

[diego.solis@osumc.edu](mailto:diego.solis@osumc.edu)