

Dental Public Health Activity Descriptive Summary

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Children's Oral Health Education Program

The New Jersey Department of Health, Children's Oral Health Program conducts school- based, interactive oral health education programs for children in grades pre-K to 12 in high need/high risk areas throughout the twenty-one counties of the State. Topics include: good oral hygiene practices, importance of regular dental exams, healthy food choices, oral injury prevention and tobacco cessation. Students participating in the oral health education programs receive oral care personal resources including toothbrush, tooth brushing timer, floss and education material for take home to use in the family setting. Schools in non-high risk areas utilize oral health teaching kits provided by the Children's Oral Health Program in the classroom setting. These kits contain teaching puppets, videos, lesson plans, reproducible and other age appropriate materials that may be used by school staff in the classroom setting. In addition, the Children's Oral Health Program administers a State funded school- based fluoride mouthrinse program, "Save Our Smiles" for schools in areas where the water supply is not optimally fluoridated. A comprehensive "Save Our Smiles" training and resource manual is provided for all participating schools. Numerous special initiatives take place throughout the school year. These initiatives include: "Sugar-Less Day to Prevent Tooth Decay" an early intervention initiative targeting fourth and fifth grade students designed to increase awareness of the relationship between healthy food choices and oral health. Students participate in a "Sugar-Less Day to Prevent Tooth Decay" poster contest with the posters displayed in the school. Participating schools enjoy extensive media and press coverage. "Project: BRUSH" targets kindergarten and first grade students and addresses healthy food choices and the importance of tooth brushing and flossing. This Program also includes the "Ask a Dental Hygienist" activity where students ask the hygienist questions about oral health for interactive classroom reply. Students participating in all special initiatives receive oral health care kits that include education material and personal care resources. On an annual basis, all schools receive the "Miles of Smiles" newsletter which serves as a resource for timely oral health topics along with program promotion efforts. Children's Oral Health Program staff collaborate with numerous State and local agencies to implement a variety of activities to improve the oral health status of school age children throughout New Jersey.

Lessons Learned:

The Children's Oral Health Program, New Jersey Department of Health has over a 30 year history of providing oral health education to school age children. The longevity of the Program highlights its success.

Program staff work in close collaboration with school nurses to educate children about the importance of good oral health and regular dental exams.

The special initiatives of "Sugar-Less Day to Prevent Tooth Decay" and "Project: BRUSH" engage students, faculty, staff and the local community about the importance of good oral health.

Media coverage promotes school- based efforts and highlights the Children's Oral Health Program activities.

Dental hygiene staff have county specific school assignments that promote continuity, support and on-going dialogue.

State and local agencies recognize the longevity and success of the Children's Oral Health Program. The Statewide Director and regional staff present program activities at numerous conferences including the New Jersey Education Association Annual Conference, New Jersey State School Nurses Conference and the New Jersey Public Health Nurse Administrators Annual Meeting in order to promote the importance of good oral health and engage multi-disciplinary staff.

Because of the long standing history of the Program, potential challenges to implement program activities have been addressed. The Program does not experience negative barriers to guide successful implementation.

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Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model

Component	Description of Activity(s) & Process	Not Part of Our Program
<p>Health Education – Integrate oral health into the health education curriculum or other subjects,(i.e. biology, nutrition, food service, phy ed).</p>	<p>The New Jersey Children’s Oral Health Program conducts school- based oral health education programs throughout the twenty-one counties of the State, targeting high need/high risk areas and areas where the water is not optimally fluoridated. Education includes information pertaining to good oral hygiene practices, healthy food choices, importance of regular dental check-ups, smoking cessation, oral piercing and prevention of oral injury. All education programs are adapted for special needs populations. In addition, Children’s Oral Health Program staff collaborated with the New Jersey Department of Education in the development of oral health education content areas to align with New Jersey Department of Education Core Curriculum Content Standards.</p>	
<p>Physical Education & Activity – Enforce the use of head/ facial protection to prevent injury during sports or related activities.</p>	<p>Oral injury prevention programs are conducted in the school setting to address the importance of using personal, protective equipment to prevent oral injury. “Safe Smiles” a mouthguard promotion program has been conducted by pediatricians and dentists at Statewide regional federally qualified health centers. Students accompanied by a parent who present at the center and identify as a contact sport participant, receive a mouthguard, education materials, toothbrush and floss and instruction in the use of the mouthguard. A “Dental Emergency Poster” prepared as a guide for oral injury in the school setting was distributed to over 3,500 schools in the State. In addition, the poster was provided to gym teachers, athletic directors and summer camp directors to highlight the importance of head/facial protection in order to prevent oral injury.</p>	
<p>Nutrition Environment & Services – school nutrition policies promote optimal dental health.</p>	<p>Healthy food choice selection is a component of all oral health education programs conducted in the school setting. The “Sugar Less Day to Prevent Tooth Decay” special initiative which is an interactive oral health education program for students takes place in the school setting. This initiative includes student preparation of a themed poster, oral health education program, student oral health resource distribution and local community involvement through media coverage in the local newspapers.</p>	
<p>Health Services – Promote a medical/dental integration that includes dental sealants and fluoride.</p>	<p>The “Save Our Smiles” voluntary fluoride mouthrinse program is a State funded, school- based program targeting students in grades 1 through 6 in areas where the water is not optimally fluoridated. The fluoride mouthrinse program has been available to schools for over 30 years. In addition, the “Dial a Smile” Dental Clinic Directory, a print and on-line resource is provided to school nurses in order to refer students for</p>	

	dental care services and assist families to secure a dental home if needed.	
Counseling, Psychological & Social Services – Educate/emphasize the impact that poor oral health has on the ability to learn and on self-esteem.		X
Social & Emotional Climate – Establish an environment where oral health prevention practices and programs are supported and valued.	The Children’s Oral Health Program has a 30 year history of conducting age appropriate interactive education programs in the school setting. Special oral health initiatives that engage the entire school community of students, faculty and staff in addition to the local community are highlighted by display of oral health education and promotion materials and media coverage in the local newspapers.	
Physical Environment – Assure the students and staff have fluoridated water available throughout the day.		X
Employee Wellness – Support tobacco cessation programs for students & staff using tobacco/e-cigarettes.	Tobacco and spit tobacco cessation programs are conducted for students in the school setting. The programs also address oral cancer awareness. Teachers and staff participate in the program. Education materials are provided for all participants. The dangers of various forms of tobacco products are also highlighted in age appropriate programs using the “Mr. Gross Mouth” teaching puppet.	
Family Engagement – Promote school and family support for oral health screenings and regular dental visits.	Various oral health special initiatives conducted in the school engage the student, parent and other family members. Education materials provided by the Children’s Oral Health Program to the school nurse include the importance of good oral health practices, oral injury prevention and use of mouthguards, importance of dental sealants, and healthy food choices. School nurses display the materials in their office and school hallways to reinforce the message of the importance of good oral health practices. Student take home materials for the parent/guardian reinforce and promote good oral health. The New Jersey Dental Clinic Directory, “Dial a Smile” is provided to school nurses and serves as a source of reference and referral for students and their families who need a dental home.	
Community Involvement – Establish partnerships with local dental professionals to assure access to dental care & preventive interventions.	The New Jersey Children’s Oral Health Program collaborates with a variety of State and local agencies in order to promote the importance of good oral health in the school and local community. These agencies/organizations include: New Jersey State Board of Dentistry, National Nursing Workgroup on Oral Health, New Jersey Departments of Education, Children and Families and Human Services, and the Association of Public Health Nurse Administrators	