

PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM SURVEY- Chronic Disease

Contact Information

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Short Title: Dental Health Program

Program Location: Caldwell County, North Carolina

Objectives and Goals:

Reduce caries and dental disease in at risk children in Caldwell County. The prevalence of early childhood caries (ECC) is increasing in low- income children in North Carolina (NC), exacerbating an already unacceptable low level of access to dental care and widening the disparities gap among socioeconomic groups. 40,000 children begin kindergarten having experienced ECC and most tooth decay occurs in low income and minority children with 33% of low-income children have untreated decay.

Methods:

Established a partnership with the local head start program to provide dental screening exams and provide dental care.

Program Length:

Twelve years or longer. Began in the mid 1990's and is an ongoing collaboration.

Number of target population reached by effort:

150 children per year.

Demographic Info:

This is a rural program aimed at Medicaid and North Carolina Health Choice participants that cross all ethnicities. There is a large Hispanic population in the county and we have other ethnicities as well.

Overall Cost:

Our program costs for salary, supplies, taxes, retirement, insurance, training and other services is approximately \$260,000 per year. We have one dentist and 3 assistants.

Funding Sources:

90 % Federal
10 % Local
Percentages ARE estimates

Outcomes:

Our clinic treats high risk, indigent children in Caldwell County. The per capita income in the county is \$17, 458 & 13.6% of the population is below the poverty level. 2008 UNC Sheps Center for Health Services data show that the county has less than 3 dentists per 10,000 population and few treat Medicaid patients. Our current population is approximately 80,000 in according to 2006 census statistics. There are 18,320 people under the age of 18 years, 2,880 Hispanics, 4,320 Blacks and 400 Asian individuals. The 2008 North Carolina Medicaid Paid Claims Data estimated that 7,622 children in Caldwell county are Medicaid eligible and 1,198 are eligible for NC Health Choice. The Health Department Dental clinic has 2 chairs and served 1,281 patients in 2007 with an overall 2,347 total patient visits. In 2008 we served 1,412 patients with a total of 2,714 patient visits. Our combined revenues for those two years were nearly \$500,000.

Did you make any estimates regarding costs deferred, outbreaks averted or deaths prevented?

No. Although there is rarely a death from dental disease it does occur. We are able though to reduce morbidity and improve quality of life for many children.

Additional Information:

Establishing the Health Department as a Carolina Dental Home is a current objective our clinic and the long-term success and impact would be to improve the number of 1-4 year old at risk children receiving services in our program. Currently, there are no programs for these children and any preventive measure targeted to prevent tooth decay would enhance the oral health and overall physical health of at risk children in Caldwell County. It is our hope that the quality and long-term impact of our project would show a reduced need for caries related dental treatment in the children of Caldwell County.

Future Plans:

We are entirely dependent on Medicaid payments and the program would cease if Medicaid funding stopped.