

PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM SURVEY- Maternal and Child Health

Contact Information

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Short Title: Dental Hygiene Students Train Public Health Nurses to Provide Oral Health Services

Program Location: New Britain, CT

Objectives and Goals:

Goal: To develop a low-cost sustainable oral health program utilizing public health nurses in an urban community.

New Britain is an urban community with a large population of low income, minority residents. Access to oral health services in this area was a problem as very few providers accepted Medicaid clients. Public health nurses have access to young children through their provision of free immunizations and home visits. This team of nurses was very interested in adding oral health education and preventive services to their client care routine. Our intent was to provide these nurses with the background and training needed to educate children from birth to five years and their parents about oral health and to provide these children with fluoride varnish applications.

Methods:

Dental hygiene students developed an educational module on basic oral health of young children and presented this to a team of public health nurses. The students demonstrated fluoride varnish application, and then observed the nurses performing this procedure. We taught the nurses to use an existing oral health education program for preschools that was developed by other students. The nurses viewed a video of the presentation and were given patterns for making props. The nurses then watched the students present the lesson to preschool children and again, the students then provided assistance as the nurses presented.

Program Length:

The initial training of the nurses for the fluoride varnish and parent education began in May 2008. The program is ongoing.

Number of target population reached by effort:

The nurses have brought the program from the Health Dept. directly to where young children are and have provided varnish and education to approx. 250 children at daycare facilities.

Demographic Info:

New Britain is a multi-cultural urban area of nearly 72,000 residents, 30% of whom are members of minority groups. Twenty five percent of children in the city live below the poverty level. The city has a large Latino population and is home to many new arrivals from Poland, Southeast Asia, Bosnia and the Middle East. Communication with families can pose a challenge because of language barriers.

Overall Cost:

Minimal funds were expended to implement this program. The training was provided by the dental hygiene students at no cost. The nurses presented this program and provided the varnish application as part of their regular work schedule. The only costs incurred were the purchase of the varnish and supplies that can be estimated to be under \$500. As the program expands and more children are treated, the cost for the supplies will increase

Funding Sources:

100 % Other, please explain: unused funds from another program were utilized
percentages ARE estimates

Outcomes:

As noted, this is an ongoing program. During the past school year, 230 children in daycare programs received fluoride varnish applications and participated in the education program. Data on the number of children receiving services and referrals at the health dept. are currently being collected and will be available shortly. Outcome data on the effectiveness of the program on this cohort cannot be assessed for many years; however, countless studies exist to demonstrate the effectiveness of fluoride in caries prevention, especially in high risk groups such as our target population.

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

As noted, longitudinal data are necessary to assess any cost savings from this program. Annual data collected on children in grades two and four in the New Britain public school system reveal an average rate of untreated dental caries to be approx. 28%.

Additional Information:

This program demonstrates the strength of collaboration between disciplines. An enthusiastic team of public health nurses, dedicated to overall health promotion and disease prevention, partnering with dental hygiene students can create a

sustainable systems change with minimal funding. It emphasizes the valuable role that can be played by students to existing health and human service programs and ultimately to members of the community at large. From an educational standpoint, this program helped to prepare future dental hygienists to work in public health and to participate in a valuable and meaningful program.

Future Plans:

The dental hygiene program at Tunxis Community College plans to continue this partnership with the New Britain and hopefully expand this project. The Director of Nursing in New Britain is continually seeking funding to enable the health dept. to expand its role in the prevention of dental disease for this community.