

**End of Project Report**

**(Narrative)**

Project Title: Healthy Teeth-Healthy Children Project

Grant Number: H47MC01952

Grantee: University of Wyoming/Wyoming Institute for Disabilities

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Project Period: September 1, 2003 to August 31, 2007

**Historical overview**

During the past 5 years the University of Wyoming's Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) oral health activities has evolved. Five years ago the first grant for oral health activities was awarded. This was a small grant from the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors which gave states seed money to bring together Head Start Health Coordinators and State Oral Health professionals. This grant resulted in a Forum on Oral Health issues for young children and their families, and at this Forum, the Wyoming Oral Health Coalition was formed and two additional grants from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) were awarded to WIND to continue their oral health activities. A summary of the Healthy Teeth-Healthy Children Projects original goals and objectives, progress towards these, weakness and strengths, impact and additional funds to sustain the activities will be discussed in this end of project report.

**Original Goals and Objectives**

In 2003, a one year \$50,000 grant from the Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) was awarded to WIND to continue the efforts put forth by the Forum. During this year the Coalition was formalized and a work plan was created. The two original goals for this grant included 1) To integrate and implement the findings of both the National Governors Association (NGA) Oral Health Policy Academy and the Head Start Oral Health Forum; 2) To strengthen, expand and sustain the Oral Health Coalition as the mechanism to address the findings. Each goal had subsequent objectives and activities. For goal 1, the objective was to assess what type of information was still needed to align the findings from the NGA report and the Head Start Oral health Forum report, by December 30, 2003. And for goal 2 the objective was to enhance

infrastructure and capacity of the Wyoming Oral Health Coalition, by December 15, 2003. While both goals and objectives were addressed during this grant year, the second goal of strengthening, expanding and sustaining the Coalition emerged as the primary goal for the group.

At the end of the first HSRA grant, the Wyoming Oral Health Coalitions membership and ambitions had expanded and in 2004 WIND was encouraged to submit a proposal for a three year HRSA Oral Health grant, which was awarded. This grant had three original goals and subsequent objectives.

The first goal was to reduce the number of children entering kindergarten with dental caries. This goal had two objectives 1) Increase the number of Head Start, Child Development Center, and private preschool children, ages six months through five years old, receiving dental sealants and fluoride varnish by October 1, 2004. 2) Coordinate oral health services for low income and underserved children in Johnson and Sheridan counties by contracting with a community oral health coordinator on or before August 1, 2004.

The second goal was a comprehensive oral health system that will be accessible for young children and their families. The objectives for goal two, were as follows: 1) Establish Oral Health Community Action teams in Sheridan and Johnson counties to ensure that the oral health care needs of low income and underserved children within their community are coordinated, comprehensive and sustainable by February 1, 2005. 2) Increase families' and oral health partners' awareness and knowledge relating to all aspects of oral health by February 2005.

Goal three was that the Wyoming Oral Health Coalition will ensure a comprehensive, sustainable statewide oral health system. The three objectives for this goal were as follows: 1) Ensure that the Oral Health Coalition continues to meet on a quarterly basis beginning September 1, 2004. 2) Identify and implement strategies to recruit dentists to the State by June 1, 2005. 3) Compile and provide information for policymakers and the public to increase access and awareness of oral health as an important public health issue by August 1, 2005.

### **Progress that occurred by the end of the four year project**

Under this grant WIND and the Wyoming Oral Health Coalition began to systematically educate and impact the state on oral health issues. After the first year the Oral Health Coalition membership expanded and the group had a sense of cohesiveness and identity. They had spent a year together discussing issues that were discovered both in the NGA report as well as the Oral Health Forum. As the Coalition added new members, new issues were brought to light, one of which was the lack of consistent oral health care screening throughout the State. As WIND prepared the second HRSA Oral Health Care grant proposal, the Coalition determined that piloting an early childhood oral health screening project should be a major focus for the next application. Although, the original grant proposal only identified having the pilot screening project for one of the three years, it was subsequently changed to have the pilot run for two years. It was during the first two years of the three year grant that the pilot screening project contracted with and later hired a Community Oral Health Coordinator (COHC) who provided free oral health services (screenings and educational materials) to low income children in Sheridan County. During that time 1,120 children received services, of those 481

received a dental screening and 639 received educational materials. These numbers show a 25% increase in both number of children screened and those who just received education materials from year 1 to year 2.

The Sheridan community was quite receptive to the pilot screening project, the COHC contacted 22 of the 36 known early childhood care providers in the counties of those 22 contacted 15 agreed to participate by giving parents information and consent forms for the screening project. The remaining seven providers either opted out or were no longer in operation. One of the justifications for extending the pilot screening project was that the COHC wanted to contact the remaining 16 providers to offer services during the second year of the Healthy Teeth-Healthy Children Project. Due to the unforeseen positive response of providers in Sheridan County for the pilot and the existing time/funding constraints of the COHC and the Healthy Teeth-Healthy Children Project, it was decided the expansion into Johnson County for the second year of the grant would be scaled back to only providing services to the Head Start and Child Development Centers.

The pilot screening project provided evidence that having a community oral health professional dedicated to raising awareness and coordinating the efforts for oral health needs for low income children and their families improved the number of children receiving education, screenings and services. The pilot screening project primarily addressed goals 1 and 2 with their respective objective of the Healthy Teeth-Healthy Children Project. The pilot screening project made continual progress on the set goals during the time it was funded by the Healthy Teeth-Healthy Children Project. Although the pilot was just in county, it provided critical information to the Oral Health Coalition about the components needed for a comprehensive, sustainable oral health system.

The findings from the pilot screening project were used by the Oral Health Coalition to develop and distribute a fact sheet to legislators during the 2006 budget session. The information highlighted Wyoming's oral health crisis, the lack of dental coverage available for adults who qualify for the State's Equality Care Dental Plan and some viable public policy recommendations. As a result of the fact sheet as well as other Coalition member's efforts to personally inform legislators of the oral health needs in Wyoming, the Oral Health Coalition had a very successful legislative session. Coalition member Senator Case from Lander was instrumental in securing funding that is providing four Public Health Hygienists to serve in eight counties. Additionally, more funds were allotted for dental care for adults who are on Medicaid. Overall, about 4 million dollars of state funding was invested in oral health activities.

In June 2006, the Oral Health Coalition had the opportunity to present about the mission, goals and activities of the Coalition, in particular the Healthy-Teeth- Healthy Children Project was highlighted at two state health professional conferences; the Wyoming Medical Society and the Wyoming Dental Association. These poster presentations provided an opportunity to share information with Dentists and physicians about the Coalition and its activities. This activity helped to lessen the previous concern that dentists had regarding the Coalition.

On June 8, 2007 The Healthy Teeth Healthy Children Project hosted an Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) training in Sheridan, Wyoming. Forty seven dentists, dental hygienists, and other health professionals attended the all day training in which they learned the knee to knee and lift the lip exam; each dentist and their clinical staff were then able to practice this exam with families who also attended the latter part of

training. The training was a great success, most participants' reported being highly satisfied with the conference and appreciated the hands on work with young children.

By convening regular meetings of the Oral Health Coalition over the four year time frame, the Coalition has established itself as an independent group with goals, objectives and work plan of its own. The goals of the Coalition have grown to be much more comprehensive than that of the Healthy-Teeth Healthy Children Project. While the impetus for the Coalition was a grant which focused on young children, the Coalition now focuses on oral health issues across the lifespan.

Throughout the last year of the project, a subcommittee of members of the Oral Health Coalition met with Mary Grams, Owner and Creative Director of Grams Graphics, on creating a systematic oral health public awareness campaign. The team decided on a logo and theme line and identified three large newspapers and two heavily trafficked billboards to display the ads.

#### **Weakness/strength of progress made**

The original goal was to have the Community Oral Health Coordinator conduct the pilot screening project in both Sheridan and Johnson counties. Due to high demand for information/supplies from the Sheridan community, the COHC was not able to expand her efforts to Johnson County. While the screenings and educational opportunities were quite well received in Sheridan County, issues with a parental consent form seemed to reduce the number of parents willing to participate in the screening. It was agreed that the original consent form might have been overly complex due to the need to meet the University of Wyoming's Internal Review Boards requirements.

The case manager for Teton and Sublette Counties did not work as planned. Although this person continued to participate on the Oral Health Coalition, targeted work within the two counties for this grant was shifted back to a state focus. The work in Sublette County was assumed by one of the four public health dental hygienist in which the state provided funding for. The primary focus of the last year of the Healthy Teeth Healthy Children project was on the ABCD training and creating an oral health public awareness campaign.

Although extensive work was done regarding the public awareness campaign, due to the transition of the Coalition's leadership, public contact information was changing (the current grant was ending and it was decided that the state dental office would apply for the next oral health grant, not WIND). The advertising campaign was finalized but has yet been run. Once the permanent location is determined, the coalition will look into running the campaign at that time.

The creation of the Gilly the Gator publication was a great success, human service providers continue to order more copies. Many of the recipients reported that this was the first publication of which they knew about that targeted good oral health practices in a story format. A weakness of this publication was that it was only published in English.

### **Impact of project**

Overall, the Healthy Teeth-Healthy Children Project has been successful in meeting its stated goals and objectives, what we are even more delighted about was our ability to make such an impact on our state in such a relatively short amount of time. In particular a summary of the Projects major impacts are discussed below.

The most direct impact of the project was that it provided services to 1,120 children, of those 481 received a dental screening and 639 received educational materials.

An additional direct impact of the project was the success of the Coalition to secure 4 million state dollars to be spent on oral health activities, in particular expanding the activities of the pilot screening project to seven additional counties as well as allotting more funds for dental care for adults who are on Medicaid.

The project was able to work with a professional graphic artist and writer to produce a professional quality oral health publication geared towards young children. Over 2,500 Gilly the Gator educational materials have been distributed throughout the state as well a nationwide (This publication has been submitted to the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center).

The Project provided a platform for the creation of the Oral Health Coalition where diverse groups of health professionals and interested citizens came together to identify and begin to address the State's oral health concerns.

### **Identify considerations for improvement**

The Coalition experienced many successes as did the Healthy Teeth-Healthy children Project in general, however one area for improvement that can be identified would be to ensure a consistent project coordinator for oral health activities. Although the three coordinators who worked on this project brought their own particular strengths to the project and to the Coalition, the number of transitions necessary was at times difficult.

While the Coalition membership has grown to be more inclusive, changing the meeting times and day of the week might allow for more active participation by dentists which would further increase its effectiveness.

In order to support dentists and their clinical staff in working with young children as well as people with developmental disabilities there needs to be a statewide systematic effort to provide ongoing training and support.

**Non federal funds that allow the project to continue**

The addition of over 4 million dollars from the state to fund four public health oral health dental hygienists to provide oral health screenings and educational services to eight counties allows aspects of the project to continue. The Coalition has agreed to continue to meet even though at this time the coalition has no additional funds. A few members have begun the process of identifying additional funding sources.