

## State Oral Health Collaborative Systems Grant Program

Florida Department of Health  
HRSA Grant Award H47MC01953

## Reducing Oral Health Disparities Through Increased Collaboration and Awareness

## End of Project Final Report

The overall goals of the project were to facilitate collaborative partnerships working towards common goals and to increase awareness of oral health issues to the public and policymakers. Objectives were to develop a comprehensive state oral health improvement plan for disadvantaged persons through a broad based collaborative process, to facilitate the continued promotion and implementation of the state plan recommendations, to promote the integration of oral health into general health with an initial emphasis on the Department of Health programs and to develop a comprehensive Internet resource site.

All objectives were accomplished except for the integration of oral health into general health programs of the Department of Health. Progress on integration, however, was made and will continue to be addressed.

The project has changed the daily operations of the Public Health Dental Program to one that strongly focuses on the development and maintenance of collaborative partnerships to increase awareness and progress toward common goals through broad based workgroups, statewide forums and local coalition development. It has enabled the development of an Internet resource site that serves as a comprehensive source for information and current activities related to oral health issues of disadvantaged persons. The project has laid the foundation that has the potential to result in significant system changes in the future.

Progress on specific objectives is as follows:

**Objective 1: Development of a broad based, comprehensive state oral health improvement plan for disadvantaged persons.**

The state plan was developed through face-to-face meetings, conference calls and emails. The plan consists of seven recommendations and 36 strategies as follows:

Recommendation 1: Improve access to community and school-based prevention programs for all ages.

Strategies:

1. Increase access to fluoridation.
2. Advocate for improved diet and nutrition in schools.
3. Expand school-based and school-linked dental sealant programs.
4. Expand school-based fluoride mouthrinse programs.
5. Develop school-based fluoride varnish programs.

Recommendation 2: Improve access to community and school-based education programs for children and adults.

Strategies:

1. Enlist support from and train school health providers and educators on oral health issues.
2. Provide appropriate grade-level oral health education curricula in both public and private schools.
3. Provide community-based oral health education presentations at school fairs, community centers, community events, nursing homes, and faith-based centers.
4. Advocate for increased funding for community and school-based oral health education programs.

Recommendation 3: Increase public and governmental awareness of oral health issues.

Strategies:

1. Educate lawmakers and policymakers about the importance of oral health.
2. Educate the public about the importance of oral health and the connection between oral health and general health.
3. Educate non-dental health care providers on the importance of oral health.
4. Conduct specific work groups, forums, or summits to develop strategies, objectives, and action steps for specific disadvantaged population groups.
5. Utilize Internet resources for oral health information and education.
6. Consider the establishment of an independent oral health coalition.

Recommendation 4: Improve state and county-based oral health data collection and research.

Strategies:

1. Develop an outcome/disease-based data collection system and develop and maintain state and county-specific profiles.
2. Develop a systematic, annual analysis of the Medicaid and KidCare programs.
3. Advocate for a statewide oral health research agenda.

Recommendation 5: Improve access to care by assuring a highly trained, diverse, appropriately allocated dental workforce.

Strategies:

1. Assure that an adequate number of appropriate dental care provider types exist and increase the diversity of dental care providers.
2. Expand professional training opportunities regarding care for special needs populations.
3. Expand volunteer incentives.
4. Consider reforms to better utilize the existing dental workforce to achieve improved access to care.

Recommendation 6: Improve access to care by assuring adequate statewide, publicly focused infrastructure and support programs.

Strategies:

1. Promote improvement of the Medicaid dental program.
2. Expand community-based safety-net fixed clinics and mobile units.
3. Promote school oral health screenings at periodic intervals with appropriate referrals.

4. Improve dental services through the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).
5. Expand centers that specialize in care for special needs populations.
6. Promote continuity of care through targeted case management and patient education.
7. Establish a county-specific, statewide resource guide of dental care programs that provide care for disadvantaged populations.
8. Develop resources to facilitate organizations applying for grants.
9. Advocate for better compensation for safety-net dental providers to improve quantity and quality of providers.
10. Explore teledentistry opportunities to increase access to care for underserved populations.
11. Co-locate dental services with other health care services.

Recommendation 7: Improve the integration of oral health prevention and education into general health.

Strategies:

1. Develop protocols to integrate oral health into all appropriate DOH programs.
2. Utilize existing community networks to identify patients with systemic diseases that relate to oral health.
3. Advocate for oral health screenings to become a standard of care in medical examinations.
4. Advocate for increased oral health training for medical professionals.

Hard copies of the state plan were not produced. Instead all documents were posted on the Internet website at [www.Oralhealthflorida.com](http://www.Oralhealthflorida.com). Core documents of the state plan consist of a PowerPoint overview, executive summary, recommendations report with strategies, action plan, and background information on oral health issues both nationally and state specific. Also included is a list of potential strategies that were considered with a brief explanation of the strategy, benefits, barriers, examples, evidence supporting the strategy and rankings of the impact that could be expected from the strategy and the feasibility to implement the strategy.

**Objective 2: Facilitate the continued promotion and implementation of the recommendations to the state plan.**

An action plan with objectives and action steps was developed to facilitate implementation. This has not been as beneficial as initially expected since most objectives require resources and partner in-kind support to make progress. It also has been very difficult to establish feasible short-term objectives since most of the partners did not want to be that specific. Short-term objectives, however, are strongly promoted for local coalitions. Major activities that have been successful to continue promotion and increased awareness have been as follows:

1. Advisory/steering body face-to-face meetings.
2. Quarterly conference calls.
3. Workgroups to address specific issues and action plans in more depth. Current workgroups consist of early childhood caries prevention, elderly, special needs, migrant, and independent, non-profit coalition development.
4. Statewide forums. Forum that have been conducted consist of Head Start, early childhood caries, seniors and children with special health care needs.

5. Local coalition development. Currently 14 counties are in various stages of activity.
6. Email distribution list. Currently over 100 organizations from the public and private sectors are included. This has proven to be the most feasible way to keep everyone informed and allows organizations to key in on their specific issues.

**Objective 3: Develop a comprehensive Internet resource site.**

A comprehensive web site was established at [www.Oralhealthflorida.com](http://www.Oralhealthflorida.com). The goal of this website is to be the starting point for organizations and policy makers to find oral health information on state specific information and to provide links to national information.

The site includes the components of the state plan, announcement of activities, updates on current initiatives, workgroups, forums and local coalitions, how to participate in activities, how to be included on the email distribution list, oral health profiles for the state and 67 counties, and links to partners and other health resources.

**Objective 4: Integration of oral health into the Department of Health general health programs.**

Attempting to integrate oral health activities into the department's general health programs has been more time consuming than expected. A survey to assess current integration activities of programs within the Division of Family Health Services was initially conducted, but this did not facilitate significant progress. Development of protocols and technical assistance guidelines are in progress. Bright Futures oral health materials will be used as a foundation of these integration efforts. Regional county health department will be conducted to promote integration once the protocols are completed. An early childhood caries prevention protocol for county health department non-dental staff was developed and will be implemented in several counties over the next few months.

Continued Support

No specific state funding has been allocated to continue the project per se, but Public Health Dental Program staff and operational expenses will continue to be used to maintain collaborative partnerships working towards common goals with a state plan as the foundation and the website as a mechanism to increase public awareness of the issues and to provide updates on current initiatives. Conference calls and emails promoting implementation of the state plan objectives will continue and face-to-face meetings, state forums and local coalition development will also continue as resources permit.

Materials Produced

As mentioned previously, no printed materials were produced. All documents and activities updates are located on the website at [www.oralhealthflorida.com/](http://www.oralhealthflorida.com/)

Documents of specific interest are the State Plan Recommendations and Strategies Report located at [www.oralhealthflorida.com/reports/SOHIP\\_RRS.pdf](http://www.oralhealthflorida.com/reports/SOHIP_RRS.pdf) and State and County Oral Health Profiles located at [www.oralhealthflorida.com/reports/county.html](http://www.oralhealthflorida.com/reports/county.html).