

2006 Whatcom County Oral Health Report

Oral Health Coalition

Activities undertaken:

The Oral Health Coalition met four times in 2006, with each meeting focusing on updates from committees and on a specific “highlighted” issue. The various committees and workgroups met numerous times, with many accomplishments including:

- 1) Three editions of the local OHC newsletter “Oral Health Matters” with articles contributed by Oral Health Coalition members
- 2) Planning and coordination of the Community Summit on Oral Health, supported by 16 partner organizations, and attended by 104 participants in June 2006.
- 3) Support of the 2nd Annual Free Sealant Day, which provided dental screenings, x-rays, education, and sealants, as well as referrals to needed restorative treatment at no- or low-cost to families. Annual Sealant Day serves children from low-income families who experience barriers to dental care access. This community day is coordinated and staffed by volunteers on a Saturday at one of the CHC dental clinics.
- 4) Support of development and implementation of the “Donated Dentistry Project” which serves low-income adults with urgent dental care needs and limited access to care. This program, which began in May 2006, is held on the 3rd Friday and Saturday of each month, with dental treatment provided by volunteer dentists. To-date approximately \$37,000 in dental services have been provided through this program at low- or no-cost to the patient.
- 5) Support of development and implementation of a mobile School Sealant Program pilot-project at four County schools with a high percentage of low-income families. This program, which utilized staff from a CHC dental clinic and provided services in the *Northwest Medical Team’s* “big rig”, will hopefully continue and expand to more sites during the next school year.
- 6) Inclusion of the parent education brochure *10 Simple Ways to Protect Your Baby’s Smile* in all newborn discharge packets at St. Joseph’s Childbirth Center in an effort to promote an early start to healthy habits and a healthy mouth.
- 7) Support of dental screening/fluoride varnish clinics provided at five childcare centers by a dental hygienist/ nurse team.
- 8) Support of a Senior Oral Health Management component at the 11th annual Caregiver Conference in Bellingham, attended by 400 professional and family caregivers of elderly and disabled persons. This presentation by OHC members grew out of work done by the Seniors & Caregivers Workgroup of the Oral Health Coalition.

- 9) Upgrade of the OHC website www.HappyTeeth.org
- 10) Selection of the ABCD/ OHC Coordinator for the “Ken Gass Community Building Award” on behalf of children & families in Whatcom County.
- 11) Dental professionals honored at Volunteer Center *Heart and Hands Awards Ceremony* for their service to our community.
- 12) Assessment report on *Adult Access to Urgent Dental Care in Whatcom County: How Changes in the Referral System Affect Patients Seeking Care, the Hospital Emergency Department, and Community Health Centers.*
- 13) Private practice community dental hygienist providing screenings, cleanings, fluoride varnish, sealants, and oral health education in a mobile setting for WIC families @ Whatcom County Health Department, with priority given to children & pregnant women.
- 14) Support and participation in dental screenings, fluoride varnish applications, and oral health education as part of the dental health component at Sea Mar’s 2nd annual Health Fair

In August 2006, the Health Department’s contract with Crossroads Consulting for OH Coalition coordination ended. The Health Department has continued to provide support for part-time staffing for the Coalition, with the role of Oral Health Coalition Coordinator being assumed by the ABCD Program Coordinator (in addition to her continued role as ABCD Program Coordinator).

The OH Coalition has continued to be very successful with broad community support as evidenced by seventeen partner organizations and approximately 170 individual members. At the end of 2006, the Executive Steering Committee developed a proposal for restructuring of the OHC Committees. It is anticipated that these committees (Access, Education, and Special Projects/ Events with oversight from the Steering Committee) will create a structure to enhance member involvement and accomplishments.

(See page 3 for ABCD update)

Access to Baby and Child dentistry Program (ABCD)

Activities during 2006 have included: outreach and linkage; ABCD orientation for parents/caregivers; oral health educational activities; retaining sufficient ABCD dentists to meet current need; planning for 2/2/07 ABCD Provider Training; participation in Whatcom County Oral Health Coalition.

A total of 524 children were enrolled in 2006 for a total of 5854 since the beginning of the program in November 2000.

During 2005, Whatcom ABCD has provided outreach, linkage, ABCD orientation, and oral health education throughout the community. The most successful location for ABCD outreach and enrollment continues to be the Whatcom County Health Department WIC program. Twenty presentations regarding the importance of children's oral health and access to early dental care have been made to staff of various community programs and parents of children in those programs, including:

- Whatcom County Health Department- Women, Infant, and Children Program (WIC)
- Whatcom County Health Department - Maternal/ Child Program
- Whatcom County Health Department – Immunization Program
- Bellingham DSHS Community Service Office
- Russian Refugee Forum
- School District Nurses
- Mt. Baker Dental Hygienists' Association
- Madrona Medical Pediatrics
- GRADS Teen Parent Program
- Family Services Outreach
- Various Childcare Centers
- Nooksack Valley Center for Children and Families
- Whatcom County Readiness-to-Learn Consortium
- Community Resource Network
- Mt. Baker District Dental Society Access Committee
- Sea Mar Community Health Center- Bellingham
- Sea Mar Community Health Center- Everson

Whatcom ABCD continues to have a sufficient pool of dental providers to meet current requests. It is difficult, however, to find successful strategies to recruit additional dentists to the ABCD provider list. During 2006, the ABCD Coordinator was actively working to develop strategies to address this challenge. The challenge is significant due to the high need combined with existing ABCD providers who have maximized their current patient load. The Whatcom ABCD Coordinator has also been actively working to increase the involvement of the local ABCD Champion and is planning an ABCD Provider Training for February 2nd, 2007