

2007 Whatcom County Oral Health Report

Whatcom County Oral Health Coalition (OHC)

Whatcom County Oral Health Coalition is a broad-based coalition working to improve oral health among community members of all ages through prevention, education, and increased access to dental care.

Activities undertaken in 2007:

The Oral Health Coalition (OHC) met three times in 2007, with each meeting focusing on committee updates and on specific “stakeholder” highlights. The OHC continues to have broad community support as evidenced by seventeen partner organizations and approximately 180 individual members. The various committees and workgroups met numerous times, with many accomplishments including:

1. Two editions of the local OHC newsletter “Oral Health Matters” with articles contributed by Oral Health Coalition members
2. Support of the 3rd Annual Free Sealant Day, which provided dental screenings, x-rays, dental sealants, and oral health education, as well as referrals for children to needed restorative treatment at no- or low-cost. 100 children received free dental services. Annual Sealant Day serves children from low-income families who experience barriers to dental care access. This community effort was coordinated by the Mt. Baker Dental Hygienists’ Society and staffed by volunteers on a Saturday at Interfaith Community Health Center (CHC).
3. Support and promotion of the “Donated Adult Dental (DAD)” program which serves low-income adults with urgent dental needs and limited access to care. The DAD program, held at Interfaith CHC on the 3rd Friday and Saturday of each month, is coordinated by Mt. Baker District Dental Society with dental treatment provided by volunteers. This program received a capacity building grant from the WDS Foundation to fund a part-time Coordinator position in 2007. Dental services valued at \$45,449 were provided in 2007 through the DAD program on a sliding fee scale or at no-cost to the patient.
4. Support of the expansion of a mobile School Sealant Program at County school sites that have a high percentage of low-income families. This program utilizes dental staff from Interfaith CHC and provides services in the *Medical Team International’s* mobile unit.
5. Coordination and implementation of an oral health station at the 2007 PeaceHealth Diabetes Health & Wellness Fair. A volunteer dental hygienist, dentist, and senior information specialist provided oral health screenings and information. This was very well received by participants. The hope is to expand involvement at next year’s Diabetes Fair.
6. Dental professionals (Jenny Shuler CDA, Curt Smith DDS, and Kathy Seholm) were honored at the Volunteer Center Heart and Hands Awards Ceremony for their service to our community. Jenny Shuler, OHC Chair, was one of eight community nominees who were specially selected for a Heart & Hands Award that included \$250 donated in her name to the nonprofit of her choice.
7. Private practice community dental hygienist provision of monthly 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.

8. Support and participation in dental screenings, fluoride varnish applications, and oral health education as part of the dental health component at Sea Mar CHC's 3rd Annual Health Fair.
9. Support of several week-long SmileMobile Dental Clinics at Lummi Nation Tribal School. These clinics, sponsored by the Washington Dental Service Foundation, provide free preventive and restorative dental services to children in need. The SmileMobile has been increasingly well received by students and families as positive connections continue to grow with every visit. Coordinated by Lummi Tribal Health Center staff, volunteer OHC dentists have also provided dental screenings in preparation for additional dental services.
10. Support and promotion of the *Smiles for Life* program, a brand new dental access program for low-income seniors. Coordinated by Registered Dental Hygienists, educational classes on preventive oral hygiene and how to be an informed dental consumer are held monthly at the Bellingham Senior Center. After taking the class, low-income seniors 60 and over may access low-cost preventive dental services. Over thirty people attended classes in October and November. Referrals for restorative care are made as available via a brokerage model.
11. Support of the development and implementation of Sea Mar CHC's volunteer dental hygiene pilot project. With priority given to pregnant women and elderly clients, patients were thrilled with the excellent services they received from volunteer registered dental hygienists. In order to sustain success of the program, additional volunteer hygienists are needed.
12. Volunteer OHC members staffed the "Happy Teeth" oral health station at numerous FoodSense Family Nights at elementary schools throughout Bellingham & Whatcom County. The students and families were very engaged with the station and everyone had a lot of fun! Sometimes it was hard to close down our station because many children kept coming back for additional turns at the "wheel" of oral health.
13. Implementation of the OHC "HappyTeeth" oral health station was also a huge hit with kids and families at the Get Movin Kick-off Health Fair in June. Hundreds of children couldn't get enough of the fun and engaging oral health activities and were thrilled with a "prize" of a toothbrush, floss etc.
14. Mt. Baker District Dental Society (MBDDS) coordinated a golf tournament to raise funds to support dental access programs throughout Whatcom, Skagit, Island and San Juan Counties. As a result, MBDDS will be donating \$500 to the OHC, as well as additional funds to the Access to Baby & Child Dentistry program (ABCD). It is unlikely that MBDDS will do a golf tournament again next year due to the lack of a tournament coordinator however it's possible that they will develop an alternative fundraising concept.
15. Development of an oral health education pamphlet, titled "10 Simple Ways to A Super Smile" for children K-6th and their parents. This brochure is being modeled on the successful parent education brochure titled "10 Simple Ways to Protect Your Baby's Smile". Brochure production is supported by an American Dental Association (ADA) Samuel Harris grant.
16. Re-printing of 10,000 additional copies of "10 Simple Ways to Protect Your Baby's Smile". This popular educational pamphlet is utilized by a numerous local organizations. Additionally the brochure has been viewed by thousands on the www.HappyTeeth.org website. The brochure has been appreciated by many dental, medical, and social service providers

throughout the world and has been modified for regionally appropriate use in a variety of locations in the U.S. and Canada. This brochure, as well as the “10 Simple Ways to Promote Senior Smiles” brochure, can be requested through the OHC website

17. Development of a relationship with the newly formed Pre-dental Student Club @ WWU. An OHC presentation was well attended and warmly received by students and club advisors. Many students joined the OHC and we look forward to partnering together in the future.
18. Promotion of “Tobacco Education Opportunities” for dental providers on-site or off-site. These brief trainings were provided at no-charge to clinicians by Whatcom County Health Department. Information was also distributed about free resources for dental offices.
19. Coordination of a Migrant Children’s Dental Health Access meeting to collaborate to improve access & utilization of dental services for this population. The group, which was composed of key stakeholders, looked at available resources and how we might be able to bring them together to best serve children and families in our community. Several possible next steps were outlined
20. Collaboration with an Interfaith Coalition initiative to distribute “Provider Appreciation Baskets” to ABCD dental offices and to dentists who have volunteered with the Donated Adult Dental (DAD) program.
21. Participation in the “Prosperity Project” Summit in order to consider how best to address issues of poverty in our community. The initial project priority was gathering baseline data about the experiences of people living in poverty. The project found that participants *rated affordable dental care as the overall #1 “service gap”*. In other words, participants saw it as extremely important and most difficult to get. This was based on interviews with 100+ people living below 125% of poverty level, and a “client intercept survey” which gathered quantitative data from another 600+ people. Affordable dental care was followed by affordable medical care, housing help, and living wage jobs. These four factors are correlated – many of the same people needed all four things. Findings from this report will be presented and discussed at the first 2008 OHC meeting.
22. Planning for inclusion of a “Dental Toolkit” for mothers of newborns to be distributed at St. Joseph Hospital Childbirth Center. This project is in collaboration with students from the University of Washington Dentistry Program in an effort to promote an early start to healthy habits and a healthy mouth.
23. Restructuring of the OHC to include four standing committees: Steering, Access, Education and Special Projects.
24. Support of dental screening/fluoride varnish clinic provided at a childcare center by a dental hygienist/ nurse team.
25. Collaborative problem-solving in order to address decreased access to care for low-income children due to loss of dental provider who saw a large volume of child patients with DSHS coverage.

Additional 2007 community developments:

- 1) Bellingham SeaMar Community Health Clinic (CHC) added a fourth full-time dentist.
- 2) Interfaith CHC received a federal 330 grant that makes them an official “Federally Qualified Health Center” (FQHC) which allows them to expand their overall services in various ways. Included in this expansion will be the opening of a satellite clinic in 2008 and inclusion of increased access for adult dental.

2007 OHC Partner Organizations:

Interfaith Coalition

St. Joseph Hospital

Mother Baby Center

Crossroads Consulting

Community members

WWU Pre-Dental Club

Bellingham DSHS CSO

Lummi Indian Health Center

Interfaith Community Health Center

Sea Mar Community Health Center

Coalition for Healthy Communities

Northwest Regional Council (NWRC)

Bellingham Technical College (BTC)

Readiness-to-Learn Consortium (RTL)

Mt. Baker District Dental Society (MBDDS)

Mt. Baker Dental Hygienist’s Society (MBDHS)

Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access (WAHA)

Dental Office Manager’s Association (DOMA)

Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD)

Access to Baby and Child Dentistry Program (ABCD)

Activities undertaken in 2007:

Activities included outreach and linkage; ABCD orientation for parents/caregivers; oral health educational activities; retaining sufficient ABCD dentists to meet current need; two ABCD Certification Trainings for dental providers; participation in Whatcom County Oral Health Coalition.

A total of 300 children were enrolled in 2007 for a total of 6050 since the beginning of the program in November 2000.

During 2007, 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. Eighteen presentations and/or discussions 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 – Children with Special Health Care Needs program
- Bellingham DSHS Community Service Office
- Russian Refugee Forum
- School District Nurses
- Mt. Baker Dental Hygienists' Association
- Madrona Medical Pediatrics
- GRADS Teen Parent Program
- Various Childcare Centers
- Whatcom County Readiness-to-Learn Consortium
- Mt. Baker District Dental Society Access Committee
- Sea Mar Community Health Center
- WWU Pre-dental Club
- Mother Baby Care
- Community Resource Network

By the end of 2007 Whatcom ABCD had a minimally sufficient pool of dental providers to meet current requests due to the sudden loss of an ABCD dental provider who had seen many children with DSHS coverage. The ABCD Coordinator has been actively working to develop strategies and resources 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 ABCD Coordinator has also been actively working to increase the involvement of the local ABCD Dentist Champion.

The Whatcom ABCD Coordinator was elected by her peers as one of two local ABCD program representatives to serve on the newly formed statewide ABCD Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee meets quarterly to guide implementation of the ABCD program in key areas including: clinical practice, coordination of ABCD and other oral health initiatives, evaluation, timing of program expansion, financial sustainability, & program promotion.

Additionally the ABCD Coordinator participated on the planning committee for 2007 Department of Health (DOH) Washington State oral health meetings