

Community Dental Health Coordinator Professional Activities Guide: *What Comes Next?*

Look at Your Current Job Duties

Encouraging Interdisciplinary Approaches to Oral Health

Can you spend one to two hours per week in the community or doing a lunchtime in-service for a medical office? Track how many you do; how many attend your session; what questions do they ask; and how many oral health screenings, anticipatory guidance, fluoride varnish applications performed, and referrals to the dentist are made **and documented** in the medical record.

Media Opportunities

With your supervising dentist, draft an Op-Ed piece for the local newspaper about National Children's Dental Health Month (February), the importance of the age 1 dental exam, the safety of oral health services for pregnant women and the improvement of overall health with improved oral health (especially for diabetics). Offer local radio and television stations one minute Public Service Announcements (PSAs) about the importance of oral health.

Identify Oral Health Stakeholders

Explore within your community to discover who else supports oral health. United Way is typically very supportive of oral health initiatives. Speak with school nurses, hospital nursing staff, and small business community leaders about supporting greater oral health awareness and mindfulness (McDonald owners like people with great smiles working with customers)

Incentives

Cultivate relationships with dental industry vendors who might provide supplies like varnish, toothbrushes and toothpaste for special events, who you will acknowledge and thank greatly

Increase School Interaction

Consult with your supervising dentist about a hosting a Back-to-School night at the office, which would include screenings, sport mouthguard impressions, and sample OH teaching curricula for teachers. Select an early evening activity so parents can stop after work. A Pizza Party for the incoming middle school crowd would be an attention grabber. Don't forget to invite the health reporter from your local newspaper.

Start Your Own Consulting/Care Business

- After reviewing your state practice act, decide what you really want to do. A school mobile program with a supervising dentist who can be the "dental home" to the kids you see? Work three to four days per week in a pediatrician office applying fluoride varnish (check your practice act), performing oral assessments and offering anticipatory guidance? Replicate the activity in an internist's office to educate patients with diabetes, HIV and cardiovascular disease about the importance of oral health.
- Check out home health care companies, group homes, assisted living facilities and talk to the health care teams there. Is there a need for oral health services? Inform yourself about the value of the "virtual dental home."
- Take a grant writing course to better obtain support funding, or check with your state dental director about possible consulting opportunities.

Community Dental Health Coordinator (CDHC) Internship Overview and Suggestions

Concept

The purpose of the CDHC internship is to demonstrate community competencies, cultural awareness, and the ability to provide community-based guidance strategies, which improve the overall health knowledge of individuals and populations.

Don't reinvent the wheel. Conduct a community assessment to see what the oral health needs of are and identify who the existing oral health stakeholders are. Build upon what exists and make it a win/win for everyone.

Possible Projects

- Work with a WIC program to educate staff and moms prior to and after an oral health educational series of in-service sessions.
- Promote the Age 1 dental visit between pediatricians, family practice physicians and local dentists.
- Survey referral patterns for diabetic patients between internists and local dental practitioners. Offer to conduct an in-service highlighting the connection between oral health and overall health.
- Visit the local hospital to assess number of patients who access the Emergency Room (ER) for management of non-traumatic dental issues and design a strategy to connect patients with appropriate care in a primary dental home setting.
- Using the local (county or city) population of pregnant women, determine which women have a current source of dental care, which medical offices discuss oral health issues with their pregnant patients and refer them for needed dental care, and assess if oral health care after delivery is monitored and continued for both mother and child. This necessitates an understanding of whether this particular state provides adult dental Medicaid services for pregnant women and/or post-partum.

Getting Started

- Conduct a needs assessment of the community.** Where are there dental clinics? Who treats uninsured patients? What do local nonprofit agencies (such as United Way) say about oral health needs of their clients? What percentage of kids in the county receive a yearly preventive visit ?
- Investigate the organization that you propose to work with,** understand their Board Mission statement and determine how your efforts could support that goal.
- Personally visit the group leader or director of the agency** involved with your project and determine what their particular oral health needs are for the organization and its relationship with the community,
- Present an outline** of what your goals are and what steps you would take to accomplish them.
- Share your project outcomes with local dental society and community leaders** for both comment and hopeful collaboration.
- Write an article for the state journal or local newspaper** outlining what you've accomplished