

Emergency Department Referral Program Development Guide

Collaborate and Share Resources With Hospital Staff

Draft a Reference Guide for ED physicians to consider for dental pain management with suggestions to partner with the dental community on decreasing opioid prescriptions and utilizing alternative medications

Request 15 minutes quarterly at the ED Department Monthly Meeting to discuss dental referral possibilities.

Get 15 minutes on the Surgery/ Oncology/ Internal Medicine (think diabetic patients) Monthly Meetings to discuss oral health/ dental referrals/ dental disease.

Have 30-60 minutes yearly with Nursing Staff to discuss oral health issues of patients/ lost denture prevention strategies.

Write an article for the hospital newsletter for all team members and the hospital Board on oral health issues, and the first dental exam occurring at 12 months.

Gather Facts

Obtain data to develop a community profile:

- From the Health Center Dental Director (no show rate; patients seen per week – the “weekly count” – patients who are turned away.
- Meeting with local oral surgeons and pediatric dentists to discover how many patients are referred from the ED.
- Contact Community Action Agency (Head Start kids need annual dental exams) to discover unmet need among kids and adults, particularly pregnant women.
- Utilize contacts with Service groups (Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions Clubs, Junior League, faith-based groups) to discover who else cares about dental disease in the community.
- Obtain monthly average of patients who access the ED for dental pain management. How do they code those visits?
- Look at local Foundations who have an interest in community health and fund projects for health improvement.
- Ask local business owners (Chamber of Commerce can help here) who have service driven staff if dental disease is an issue for their productivity.
- Talk with the pediatric dentists about their Medicaid participation and the number of parents who request referrals for care.
- Ask local dentists how many calls they receive from adults seeking emergency care.

Develop a Model

Don't forget the ADA has collected [samples of different models](#) to duplicate or use as a starting point.

Work with the hospital, local dentists, and community clinics to brainstorm best ways to meet the needs of the community.

Pilot a model between one or two hospitals in the community.

Record the process of the model, and regularly meet with hospital staff, dental facilities, and others administering to discuss successes and challenges of the pilot.

Be flexible. Changes to the model may be necessary.

Collect data during the pilot. How many patients were referred? What works well? What doesn't work well? Get feedback from the Emergency Department, patients, and referral sites.

Get the initial stakeholder group back together to discuss the results of the pilot and to decide how to proceed.