

Successful Partnerships to Improve Oral Health in Head Start

Contact Information

Program title: North Carolina Home-based Early Head Start Latino Moms, Infants/Toddlers and Dental School Services Initiative

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Funded enrollment: 180 total, 100 Early Head Start, 80 Head Start

Program Information

Type of Program

Early Head Start and Head Start

Location of Program

Combination or other program option

Partnership Information

Orange County Head Start/Early Head Start and the University of North Carolina School of Dentistry (UNCSOD) are collaborating on an initiative to deliver oral health services to children enrolled in the Early Head Start home-based option. These children come from families who speak Spanish as their primary language. Most of the families are from Mexico.

The objectives of this collaboration are as follows: (1) deliver oral health services to children enrolled in Early Head Start and (2) ensure that the oral health-related Head Start program performance standards are being met.

The long-term objectives that will benefit children in Early Head Start include (1) establishing a dental home for the children and (2) decreasing the rate of oral disease among this population.

The long-term objectives that will benefit UNCSOD are (1) improve access to care for children in Early Head Start, (2) train the future dental work force to work with infants, young children, and their caregivers, and (3) positively impact access to oral health care and oral health status for children in North Carolina.

Oral Health Activity

Education

Disease prevention

Service delivery

Activity Description

- Fifty children from birth through age 3, including those with special health care needs enrolled in the Early Head Start home-based option, and several siblings not enrolled in our program
- Parents enrolled in the Early Head Start home-based option
- Early Head Start bilingual home visitors and health/nutrition coordinator
- School of Dentistry participants—faculty, residents, and dental students

Within the first 90 days of the Head Start program year, five to six children and their mothers are transported by van to the UNCSOD pediatric clinic each week (seven clinics in the fall and seven clinics in the spring). This ensures that these children, who are all at high risk for oral disease, will be seen twice a year. The mothers and children are accompanied by their bilingual home visitor and the health/nutrition coordinator. Some mothers choose to transport their children by car.

The children and their mothers are seen by either a dental resident or a student. A bilingual faculty member provides supervision. An interpreter is also available. During the time that the child and mother are being seen the following is accomplished:

- The mother is interviewed about the child's nutrition and oral hygiene routines.
- The child receives a clinical oral examination.
- Fluoride varnish is applied to the teeth of children who have at least one tooth.
- The mother receives a preventive oral health plan.
- The bilingual home visitor receives an oral health plan, written in English, to be placed in the child's file for review by the home visitor and the mother during future home visits. (The faculty member is unable to translate the written plan into Spanish because of time constraints.)
- Concurrently, in the clinic waiting area, the bilingual home visitor is facilitating a socialization activity related to oral health.