

## **Successful Partnerships to Improve Oral Health in Head Start**

### **Contact Information**

Program title: Missouri's Preventive Services Program

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Funded enrollment: State Supported

### **Program Information**

#### Type of Program

Early Head Start and Head Start

#### Location of Program

Center-based program option

### **Partnership Information:**

The Preventive Services Program (PSP) philosophy is based on a partnership with a community-based health coalition. The coalition provides the justification for PSP implementation (needs assessment) as well as outreach and community support needed to ensure compliance and participation of children and their families in the community. The coalition provides the assurance that the entire community, including local government, businesses, social service agencies, schools, and the population in general, are supportive of the PSP and are informed as to the impact, or potential impact, that the PSP can have on the community's overall health. This partnership ensures sustainability of the program and local pride and ownership in children's oral health.

### **Oral Health Activity**

Education

Disease prevention

Service delivery

### **Activity Description**

After 9 months of activity, the PSP has screened approximately 5,600 children. This has provided baseline data that will be essential in determining outcomes. Currently, 22 Head Start programs are planning PSP activities for the 2007–2008 year. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) oral health consultants are available to assist in the process, and Head Start personnel are being trained to work with coalitions and other health agencies to provide the pipeline of care, which takes the child from screening through needed treatment.

### Education

Group Instruction: Each participant in the PSP will receive instruction on oral self-care (i.e., brushing and flossing), nutrition, the importance of oral care, the impact of oral health on overall health, and services available through the PSP. DHSS will provide printed materials, video instruction, and toothbrushes to facilitate the education process.

Media Campaign: A community-specific media campaign will focus on nutrition, self-care, and the impact of oral health on overall health. Tag lines will be developed and provided on local radio stations. DHSS will support a local contact to facilitate referrals and PSP information and dissemination of educational materials.

Printed Materials: DHSS will provide, in collaboration with state and national partners, printed educational materials on oral health care, nutrition and other oral-health-related topics. DHSS will also provide battery-powered toothbrushes to be distributed to participating children in the community.

### Disease Prevention

Fluoride varnish is the clinical preventive service provided through the PSP.

### Service Delivery

Essential to PSP implementation and evaluation is the use of a standardized oral health screening process. This process will provide the target population's baseline oral health status prior to the PSP intervention. The data collected at the screening will be shared with the community so that outcomes can be measured.

Treatment urgency is determined at the time of screening. Referral of children in urgent need of oral health treatment will be to the child's dentist, if available, or to an area clinic. The community coalition will facilitate arrangements for local oral health professionals. Preference will be given to those with urgent oral health care needs.