

Successful Partnerships to Improve Oral Health in Head Start

Contact Information

Program title: Building a New Tradition: Partnering to Access Oral Health Care in College Station, Texas

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Funded enrollment: 178

Program Information

Type of Program

Head Start

Location of Program

Center-based program option

Partnership Information

CSISD Head Start is committed to locating and coordinating oral health services in the most practical way. To create a seamless and convenient oral health care program for children and families in our service area, a variety of steps have been implemented.

Accessing local resources is the foundation of this effort. Establishing relationships and communicating appreciation for assistance provided is the first step.

Educating providers and their staff on both the needs of the community and the issues involved in working with individuals with low incomes is critical as well. The importance of building and maintaining trust with providers is also key.

Integrating health programming into the classroom is accomplished in a variety of ways. Children's literature, special speakers, field trips, and specific health-related materials are some of the strategies that have been used. In addition, children and staff regularly practice health routines and engage in health-related discussions.

Provision of health care information is the step that links classroom instruction with home practices. Dedicated family-focused staff, along with administrative and classroom positions, focus on providing families with important updates and basic information in a familiar and useful format.

Resources provided by national and state organizations add value and inject the most current information, policies, and plans to the program's work. These resources can be used for staff development as well as parent education.

All Head Start program staff serve as health supporters for children and families. By coordinating the work assigned and by ensuring that all staff has access to the most current and useful information, Head Start is able to create strong partnerships that encourage success for everyone.

Oral Health Activity

Education

Disease prevention

Service delivery

Activity Description

CSISD Head Start works efficiently and effectively toward pursuing the goals that the Office of Head Start mandates through the Head Start program performance standards. CSISD Head Start delivers a comprehensive oral health education component, including daily oral hygiene practices, hands-on curricula in classrooms, and presentations on oral health to all interested parents. The program also offers several opportunities for free oral examinations by helping families find a dental home, scheduling appointments, and providing examinations on each campus.

CSISD Head Start introduced three programs during the 2006–2007 school year: (1) Healthy Start for Texas Teeth, (2) M.A.S.H. Make a Smile Healthy, and (3) Adopt a Dental Treatment.

Collaborations were formed with the Texas Dental Hygienists' Association, Blinn College, the Department of Dental Hygiene, CSISD Child Nutrition Services, community health agencies, and dentists. Through these partnerships, CSISD Head Start provided (1) over 164 oral examinations, (2) fluoride varnish to 156 children twice during the 2006–2007 school year, (3) extensive oral treatment for approximately 11% of the population urgently in need of oral care, and (4) an oral health fair for children and families.

These collaborations have been instrumental in meeting the oral health needs of children enrolled in Head Start. Over \$15,000.00 worth of dental treatment, fluoride varnish applications, supplies, educational materials, and prizes have been donated for the purpose of providing access to oral health care. This amount does not include time donated by professionals.