

# Focus On Oral Health



A newsletter for North Dakota's oral health community

December 2009

## Seal! North Dakota offers school-linked services

### Helping North Dakota's students

North Dakota's dental sealant program – *Seal! North Dakota* – has gained a willing partner, a little momentum and some hope for the future. *Bridging the Dental Gap* of Bismarck has joined forces with the North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program and will be providing services to some local school children in February.

On February 22, the clinic staff will provide screenings and dental sealants to second graders from Bismarck's Jeannette Myhre Elementary School. The students will be bused to the clinic and those who need them will have sealants applied to their 6-year molars. The students also will receive a packet that includes a toothbrush, literature for the parents and the results of the clinical visit.

According to Robyn Stearns, Oral Health Program manager at the North Dakota Department of Health, the services offered by *Bridging the Dental Gap* is coming at the perfect time.

"February is National Children's Dental Health Month, a time when we promote the importance of

oral health in children," said Stearns. "We're very excited that *Bridging the Dental Gap* has offered to help some of our local school children, providing them with the dental services they so desperately need."

*Bridging the Dental Gap* will continue the free dental sealant program, offering a day of services during each quarter. Their service area encompasses towns and rural areas within a 50-mile radius of Bismarck, so schools within that range will be the ones to receive services.

The clinic may be able to recover some of its costs if any of the students qualify for Medicaid.

### The need for Seal! North Dakota

As a part of North Dakota's U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) oral health grant, the state must start a school-based dental sealant program. This has proven to be a challenge since according to North Dakota state law, a dental hygienist cannot perform services unless he/she is under "general" supervision of a dentist. Since a dentist is not available to supervise the public health hygienists who would perform services in school settings, it has proven difficult to arrange a way to provide the needed school-based sealant program.

### The future of Seal! North Dakota

Other safety net clinics in the state have expressed interest in providing services but are currently dealing with paperwork and funding requirement issues that must be ironed out before they can participate. Funding also is being sought to increase the services provided by *Seal! North Dakota*.

**DENTAL SEALANTS**

**What are dental sealants?**  
Dental sealants are thin plastic coatings that are applied to the grooves on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth (molars) to protect them from tooth decay. Sealants keep bacteria and food particles out of the grooves in the teeth.

**How are sealants applied?**  
Applying sealants is quick and easy. The tooth is cleaned, and a special gel is placed on the chewing surface for a few seconds. The tooth is then washed off and dried, and the sealant is painted on the tooth. The dental professional also may shine a light on the tooth to help harden the sealant. It takes about a minute for the sealant to form a protective shield. Children can eat or drink immediately after the sealant procedure is done.

**How long do sealants last?**  
A sealant can last for as long as five to 10 years. They can be reapplied if they are no longer in place.

**Does my child really need sealants?**  
Sealants protect the teeth from decay (cavities) and can prevent the need for dental fillings. Once decay is present, it can permanently damage your child's teeth. Sealants can save time, money and the discomfort sometimes associated with fillings.

**Will my child feel or see the sealants?**  
Your child may feel the sealant with their tongue after it is first placed on their tooth, but sealants are very thin and your child will quickly adjust to them. Sealants only can be seen up close. They usually are not seen when a child smiles or talks.

**Does my child need to do anything else to prevent tooth decay after he or she has a sealant?**  
Sealants protect the chewing surfaces of the teeth, but regular dental visits and good oral hygiene still are needed to protect the other parts of the teeth, the gums and the mouth. Children should brush their teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, floss once a day, make wise food and drink choices, and visit a dental professional twice a year.

For more information about dental care for your child, contact:  
Oral Health Program  
Division of Family Health  
North Dakota Department of Health  
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301  
Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0200  
701.328.2356 or 800.472.2286  
[www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth](http://www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth)

NORTH DAKOTA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

# Coalition News



At its September 2009 meeting, the North Dakota Oral Health Coalition received updates on the following topics:

## **Oral Health Coalition Survey**

The 2009 Oral Health Coalition Survey garnered feedback from the North Dakota Oral Health Coalition Partnership members regarding their work to advance oral health care in North Dakota. The goal of the survey was to better understand the challenges and barriers that members faced during the past year in order to explore the most effective ways to move forward. Results of the survey can be viewed at [www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth/](http://www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth/). Click on Oral Health Coalition in the left column and then click on North Dakota Oral Health Coalition Survey – 2009.

## **Surveys Being Conducted**

- Approximately 1,500 third-grade students from across the state will be surveyed in the Basic Screening Survey, which gathers information about the oral health of children.
- Approximately 1,700 dentists, dental hygienists and dental assistants are being surveyed for the 2009 Dental Workforce Survey, which assesses age, location, practice setting and specialty, and patient activity of the state's dental workforce.

## **North Dakota's Care Mobile Project**

Plans for the North Dakota Care Mobile are moving forward. Topics discussed included defining clinical providers, working with other entities to secure short-term funding and ensure sustainable funding for the project, and determining how to handle billing procedures. The Care Mobile will be restricted to providing services only to children.

## **Safety Net Clinic Updates**

The Red River Dental Access Project in Fargo, Northern Dental in Grand Forks and Bridging the Dental Gap in Bismarck gave updates on their clinics. All continue to see a maximum number of patients and are booked three to six months in advance.

To view complete meeting minutes, go to [www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth/Coalition.htm](http://www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth/Coalition.htm).

## **Head Start Dental Home Initiative active in North Dakota**

The Head Start Dental Home Initiative is a partnership between the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and the Office of Head Start. The goal of the initiative is to make sure every Head Start child in America has a dental home – a place they can get a continuous and available source of prevention and treatment in a comprehensive manner.

In North Dakota, there are 21 Head Start programs and about 3,500 enrolled children. Since many of these children are Medicaid-eligible, it is sometimes difficult for them to access dental offices due to limited Medicaid participation by dentists. The North Dakota Dental Association endorsed the Initiative in 2008. Since then, efforts have been directed at establishing networks of dentists who will partner with their local Head Start programs to provide screenings and, ultimately, dental homes for kids.

In September 2009, the North Dakota Head Start Initiative received a \$10,000 grant from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and Head Start to provide oral health educational resources and curriculum to Head Start staff and families, as well as to help fund organizational and travel costs for the state leadership group.

In the last few months, visits have been made to the Standing Rock and Turtle Mountain Head Start programs to help identify problems and offer help. In December 2009, surveys were sent out to all North Dakota dentists to determine their interest in becoming more involved with their local Head Start program through helping with dental screenings and/or accepting kids that need treatment into their practices. It is hoped that this information will be an accurate resource for local Head Start programs to help them improve their oral health activities.

Future activities include development and distribution of educational resources, continued technical assistance to local programs, and building the provider networks.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Brent L. Holman, state leader for the initiative, at:

Dr. Brent L. Holman  
2538 S. University Drive #A  
Fargo, N.D. 58103  
701.232.1148  
Or, e-mail Dr. Holman at [blholman@aol.com](mailto:blholman@aol.com).

## Give Kids a Smile events help children in need

In February 2009, 34 dentists from across North Dakota volunteered to provide free dental care to children during the annual Give Kids a Smile Day events. Dentists and dental professionals in Bismarck, Devils Lake, Grand Forks, Mandan, Wahpeton and Williston served 449 children – providing \$49,000 worth of services such as x-rays, fluoride treatments, dental sealants, fillings, extractions and oral health education.

“We know there are many families in North Dakota without the ability to pay for dental services and many children who are suffering because they don’t have access to care,” said Kimberlie Yineman, director of the North Dakota Department of Health’s Oral Health Program. “It was wonderful to see so many dental professionals offering their time and talents to the Give Kids a Smile Day events – helping to make a difference in the lives of children.”

A program of the American Dental Association, Give Kids a Smile Day is observed every year on the first Friday of February. This national event is designed to provide education, preventative and restorative care to children from low-income families. February is also National Children’s Dental Health Month, an ideal time to provide additional education about oral health to all children and parents.

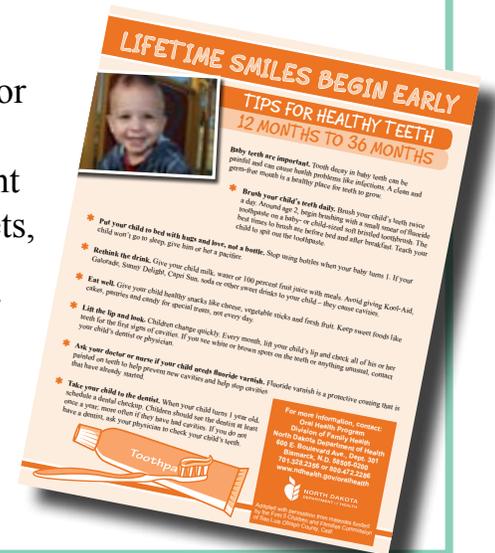
Along with dentists and their staff members, many others contributed to the 2009 events – including local dental coalitions, local public health units, social service agencies, the North Dakota Dental Association, the North Dakota Department of Health, the North Dakota Dental Foundation, the American Dental Association, Sullivan Schein, Patterson Dental and many community volunteers.

The 2010 Give Kids a Smile Day will be observed February 5. Any dental professionals who would like to sponsor an event in February or who would like to donate their services to another local event should contact Yineman at 701.328.4930. Any other organizations or volunteers who would like to contribute or become involved also can contact Yineman.

“The 2009 events were great successes,” said Yineman. “We’re hoping that more dental professionals and other volunteers will join the effort in 2010 and we will be able to help more of North Dakota’s children feel better and smile more.”

## Items Available

**Tips For Healthy Teeth** fact sheets for ages birth to 21 years are available for use in dental offices. To print these fact sheets, go to [www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth](http://www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth) and click Fact Sheets and Brochures.



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## Join the North Dakota Oral Health Coalition

The North Dakota Oral Health Coalition (NDOHC) represents public, private and nonprofit organizations and individuals interested in developing and promoting innovative strategies to achieve optimal oral health for all North Dakotans.

If you are interested in joining the coalition, complete and mail the application below, call 701.328.2356 or 800.472.2286 (press 1), or send an e-mail to [cebach@nd.gov](mailto:cebach@nd.gov).



### North Dakota Oral Health Coalition Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: North Dakota Oral Health Coalition, North Dakota  
Department of Health, 600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301,  
Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0200.

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