

Focus On Oral Health



A newsletter for North Dakota's oral health community

Summer 2011

Oral health survey being conducted for older adults

The Basic Screening Survey (BSS) for Older Adults will take place in North Dakota long term care facilities fall 2011 through spring 2012. The primary intent of the survey is oral health surveillance of the North Dakota population residing in the facilities. The survey indicators focus on tooth decay, gum inflammation, the presence of any oral lesions, and if the patients are wearing partials or dentures. The insurance and dental provider status of participating residents also will be assessed. The BSS does not involve making a clinical diagnosis resulting in a treatment plan. However, each participating resident (or his or her guardian) and the facility's director of nursing will receive a screening summary indicating his or her individual need for oral care. All residents within a random sample of North Dakota long term care facilities will be invited to participate.

Betty Vetter, director of nursing at the Villa Maria nursing facility in Fargo, indicates that several oral health challenges exist among older adults living in long term care facilities. Oral health challenges include access to dental care and personal oral hygiene behavior. According to Vetter, the biggest challenge for dental care access "is for [residents] on Medicaid." There is a growing trend of North Dakota dentists limiting access to patients with Medicaid insurance. Also, residents that have health conditions inhibiting mobility and access to the dental chair can make it "very difficult or sometimes impossible for the personnel at the dental office to work on them," said Vetter. Barriers to hygiene behaviors include the difficulty for residents to brush and floss their teeth and prohibiting staff members from helping them.

The vision of the North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program is to have good oral health for all North Dakotans. Kimberlie Yineman, program director, said, "There are so many older adults who have a great need for dental care. In order to fulfill the program vision, data is required to determine where the greatest need is."



The BSS will be performed by licensed dental hygienists who are employed by the North Dakota Department of Health as Public Health Hygienists. Following screening, participants will receive oral care supplies and additional oral health information. Results will be used to guide oral health program prioritization and assist with the implementation of an oral health program, known as "A Generation of Smiles," to provide dental education and on-site care, including prophylaxis (dental cleanings) and denture care to older adults. Survey completion and findings are anticipated by summer 2012. The BSS for Older Adults is planned to be repeated every five years.

Healthy Smiles and Seal! North Dakota Programs moving into schools

This fall, the North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program will begin implementation of the Healthy Smiles Fluoride Varnish and Seal! North Dakota Programs in schools. Both programs will begin in schools with 50 percent or more of their students receiving free and reduced-price meals.

The Healthy Smiles Fluoride Varnish Program will visit the schools twice annually to screen and apply fluoride varnish for students in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. Students also will be provided toothbrushes and oral health education. This program will be provided in schools where community water fluoridation is below the optimal level.

The Oral Health Program's public health hygienists will begin scheduling schools for the school-based Seal! North Dakota Program in early September. The hygienists will bring all needed supplies and a complete portable dental unit into the schools, which will include a patient chair, operator's chair, instrument tray and autoclave. This will allow the hygienists to provide dental screenings, fluoride and sealants to those children in need in the second and sixth grades. Information will be sent home to parents showing which teeth received services and if a referral to a dentist is needed for further treatment. This program will not take the place of a dental home and the hygienists will strongly urge parents to make sure their children see a dentist on a regular basis.

Seal! North Dakota also is maintaining its school-linked sealant program through Bridging the Dental Gap in Bismarck, with the second and sixth grade students at Riverside School. Both the Healthy Smiles Fluoride Varnish Program and Seal! North Dakota Programs are provided at no cost to the students and are funded by a grant through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

Coalition News



North Dakota Oral Health Coalition updates:

Farewell to an outstanding advocate – Karen Larson was a valued member of the North Dakota Oral Health Coalition, serving as chair of the policy subcommittee. She retired from her position with the Community Health Association of the Dakotas shortly before she passed away on May 29, 2011. Karen had the special gift of facilitating discussions and being able to diffuse conflict in a non-threatening manner. Karen's passion for oral health, coupled with her determination, helped improve access to oral health in North Dakota. Karen will be missed by many, including all of her friends on the Oral Health Coalition.

The next meeting of the North Dakota Oral Health Coalition will be held September 8 from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. at the Gold Seal Building in Bismarck. If you are interested in joining the coalition, please contact Colleen Ebach at 701.328.2356 or cebach@nd.gov.



Dr. Sara Jumping Eagle has fluoride applied to her teeth during a Healthy Smiles fluoride application training session at Mid Dakota Clinic in Bismarck.

Thank you to Dr. Gary Cornforth of Fargo, Dr. Alison Fallgatter of Jamestown and Dr. Tony Fisher of Williston for donating their time and talent to provide orthodontic training to public health nurses on behalf of the North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program.

North Dakota Oral Health Program involved in healthy education for kids

Riverside Elementary School in Bismarck holds events each year to help educate the children and their families about healthy living. The “Family Matters” event is held prior to Christmas break with families completing learning activities with their children.

The “Pick N’ Patch” event is held every spring. Staff members teach the students how to plant a garden, harvest and eat healthy foods. They also teach about proper nutrition.

The North Dakota Oral Health Program participated in both events by providing oral health education, toothbrushes and brochures about the proper way to floss and brush.



Families gather at Riverside’s Family Matters event (top); and the Oral Health Program booth (bottom).

Spirit Lake Dental Blitz to be held September 30

A large group of pediatric dentists, general dentists, dental students, hygienists, assistants and office staff from across North Dakota and out of state will gather at Spirit Lake (Fort Totten) on Sept. 30 to help brighten the smiles of 100 to 200 area children younger than 12 years of age.

America’s Dentists Care Foundation Missions of Mercy will be bringing a semitrailer with equipment that will be set up in the school gym. Children will receive screenings, cleanings, sealants, fluoride varnish, restorative care, education and prevention materials.

Volunteers are not only needed for dental care, but also for patient and parent education activities, traffic flow and registrations. If anyone would like to donate supplies, equipment or their time and talents to this event, please contact Dr. Brent Holman at 701.232.1148.



North Dakota Regional Public Health Hygienists

Jamie Blumhagen, R.D.H.

Hollie Harrington, R.D.H., B.S.

Marlene Hulm, R.D.H.

Carla Kelly, R.D.H.

Helen Rosencranz, R.D.H.

For assistance with oral health needs in your school or community, please contact the North Dakota Department of Health’s Oral Health Program at 701.328.2356 or cebach@nd.gov.

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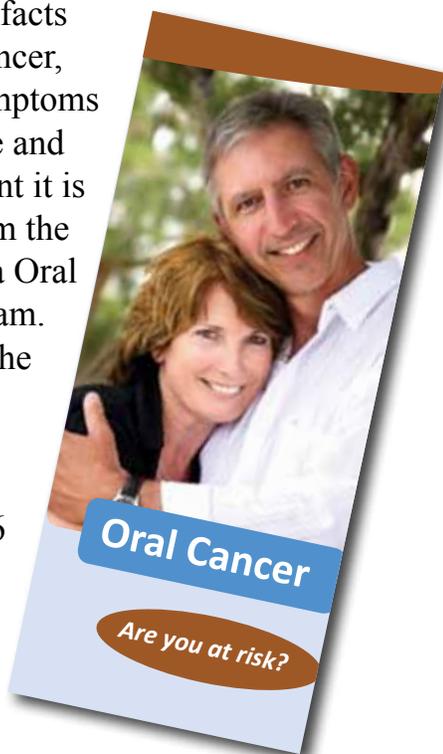
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Items Available

A brochure outlining the facts about oral cancer, signs and symptoms of the disease and how to prevent it is available from the North Dakota Oral Health Program.

Copies of the brochure can be ordered by calling 701.328.2356 or e-mailing cebach@nd.gov.



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