

Oral Health Facts

Programs and Services

December 2011

Good Oral Health for All North Dakotans

The North Dakota Department of Health's Oral Health Program collaborates with other public and private agencies and organizations to develop and implement programs and policies to address the oral health needs of North Dakotans. Funding to support the programs, projects and services is provided by grants and cooperative agreements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (State-Based Oral Disease Prevention), the Health Resources and Services Administration (Maternal and Child Health Grant Programs) and state funds (Dental Loan Repayment and Grant Programs).

Community Water Fluoridation – Community water fluoridation is the most effective public health measure to prevent and control tooth decay. The Oral Health Program works with the Department of Health's Drinking Water Program to implement fluoridation of public water supplies, monitor the fluoridated systems, inspect fluoridation equipment, provide training for water plant operators and provide education regarding community water fluoridation. The programs maintain the North Dakota data in the national Water Fluoridation Reporting System (WFRS).

Healthy Smiles Fluoride Varnish Program – The Oral Health Program provides fluoride varnish through a preventive school-based program targeting schools with a 50 percent or greater free and reduced-price meal rate, as well as rural schools located in areas without an optimal level of 0.7 ppm of fluoride in the water supply. Parent-guardian consent is required to participate in the school-based program. The fluoride is applied twice annually during the school year. Topical fluoride varnish is safe, effective and easily painted on all tooth surfaces.

The Oral Health Program provides training on the application of fluoride varnish in non-dental settings, such as pediatrician's offices, local public health unit offices, Head Start and schools. Fluoride varnish is effective in reducing tooth decay among individuals who are at high risk.

Seal! ND Dental Sealant Program – The Oral Health Program has teamed up with safety-net dental clinics to provide dental sealants to third- and sixth-grade students. Students in specific elementary schools with a 50 percent or greater free and reduced-price meal rate and who lack access to dental care are offered the service during *Seal! ND* event days throughout the year.

The Oral Health Program also is starting a school-based dental sealant program in 2011, that will bring sealant services to students in schools with a 50 percent or greater free and reduced-price meal rate.

Dental Access Programs – The Oral Health Program provides technical assistance and consultation, identifies resources, and provides support for the development of dental clinics and other programs to increase access to oral health services.

Donated Dental Services – The Oral Health Program collaborates with the North Dakota Dental Association and provides support for administration of a network of volunteer dentists who provide dental care to our state's most vulnerable people: disabled, elderly or medically-compromised individuals who cannot afford necessary treatment nor get public aid.

Dental Loan Repayment and Grant Programs – The Oral Health Program collaborates with the Office of Community Assistance to promote and administer loan repayment and grant programs to attract dentists to practice in rural and underserved communities in the state. The program assists with Dental Health Professional Shortage Area designations.

Local Grants Program – The Oral Health Program provides support to oral health programs in three local public health agencies to provide preventive services and oral health education in schools and communities.

Regional Public Health Hygienists – Regional public health hygienists provide oral health education for schools and communities, conduct oral health screenings and provide oral health training and guidance for health professionals. The regional hygienists are registered dental hygienists who educate the public about the importance of good oral health and its impact on overall health.

Oral Health Education – The Oral Health Program provides consumer and professional education on the prevention and treatment of oral diseases through websites, newsletters, brochures, fact sheets and training programs.

Oral Health Surveillance – The Oral Health Program monitors the oral health status and treatment needs of North Dakotans and the dental workforce capacity in the state through surveys, screenings and health databases. The information is used to describe the burden of oral disease and to plan and evaluate oral health programs and services in the state.

State Oral Health Plan – The North Dakota Oral Health Plan outlines the priorities, goals, objectives and strategies to improve the oral health of North Dakotans. Multiple stakeholders from the public and private sector developed the plan collaboratively. The plan is updated periodically.

Oral Health Coalition – The Oral Health Program assists the state coalition by providing administrative support, facilitating communication and maintaining a web page for the coalition. The program also assists with evaluation of the coalition.

