

February is National Children's Dental Health Month



Health centers play a pivotal role in increasing access to oral health care to our nation's most vulnerable populations and underserved communities. In 2017, HRSA-funded health centers provided dental services to 6.1 million patients and dental sealants to over 266,000 children, ages 6 to 9 years with elevated caries risk.

Within their communities, health centers have implemented innovative strategies to address the oral health needs of children. Read a few examples of promising practices from HRSA-funded health centers that may be useful to other health centers interested in enhancing their oral health programs:

Improving the UDS Dental Sealants Measure

Regional Primary Care Network, Rochester, New York

- Increased the number of children ages 6 to 9 and 10 to 14 receiving dental sealants using several Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles and the implementation of a "same day sealant" strategy.
- The strategy established a new workflow where children ages 6 to 14 can receive sealants at the same time as any other dental appointment (except for emergency, extraction, or limited exam visits).
- Lessons learned included emphasizing the need for sealants as a disease management strategy to providers and training on documentation of sealants.
- The "same day sealant" strategy resulted in increased percentages of children receiving dental sealants over 21 months from January 2017 to September 2018:
 - 27% to 49% for children ages 6 to 9
 - 25% to 52% for children ages 10 to 14

For more information, contact [Sherilee Callahan](#), Director of Oral Health

Oral Health and Primary Care Integration in the OB/GYN and Well-Child Visit

Albany Area Primary Health Care, Albany, Georgia

- Increased access to dental care for pregnant women by establishing a dedicated dental space within the OB/GYN clinic (two dental chairs) operating twice a week and rotating between the dentist and dental hygienist.
- OB/GYN patients are first assessed through the nurse triage questions about whether or not they have a dental provider and the approximate date of their last dental visit.
- The women's health nurse practitioner conducts caries risk assessments and provides oral health education, information, and referral for dental appointments.

For more information, contact [Clifton Bush](#), Chief Operating Officer

Hamilton Health Center, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

- Increased early access to dental care for children and parents by embedding a public health dental hygienist with a dedicated space (a one-operatory dental room) in the pediatric department.
- During well-child visits, the hygienist provides dental screenings for children up to age 5, oral health education to parents/caretakers, and a referral to the dental clinic for older children.
- Over the past five years, this integrative approach led to positive engagement with parents and early access to oral health care.



For more information, contact [Jeannine Peterson](#), Chief Executive Officer

Expanding Delivery of Care: A Rural School-Based Dental Program

Missouri Ozarks Community Health, Ava, Missouri



- Increased access to dental care for children across four counties living in remote, rural areas with limited transportation, coordinates referrals for continued care, and strives to create a positive experience for children receiving care.
- The program provides comprehensive and ongoing dental treatment to children (pre-K to 12th grade) through a school-based dental program. Initially, the program provided services through portable dental equipment set up in schools, but they have since expanded to a mobile dental unit/truck with two operatories, a dentist, and 2-3 dental assistants.
- Since the addition of the mobile dental unit/truck in mid-October 2018, the program operates five days a week and has served six schools and one Head Start Program.

For more information, contact [Dr. Sybil Fortner](#), Dental Director