

Providing Dental Education to Home Visiting Families with Children 0-5

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Background

The Centers is the oldest and largest health and human service agency in Northeast Ohio. The organization fights for equity by integrating health and wellness services for families including primary care, behavioral health care, addiction services, HIV treatment, and pharmacies. Their dental services include affordable routine checkups and emergency care. For the 2022-2023 school year within enrolled families, 36.8% of children aged 0-5 were identified as needing dental treatment. Of that, only 13.8% were able to receive treatment before the end of the school year. The Centers reduces this disparity by making care accessible via home visits.

Population

All families are enrolled in *Head Start*, the government's nationwide early learning program to promote school readiness for children aged 0-5 from low-income families.

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize and understand which communities don't have adequate access to resources such as dental care
2. Bring dental care to these families and communities by promoting The Centers' initiative regarding home visits
3. Learn how to deliver culturally competent care and promote preventive care through education

Activities

- Provided basic dental education including hygiene and nutrition information to families with children under five
- Explained the importance of preventive dentistry and seeing a provider from a young age
- Clarified any misconceptions or questions parents had about dental treatment and care

Deliverables

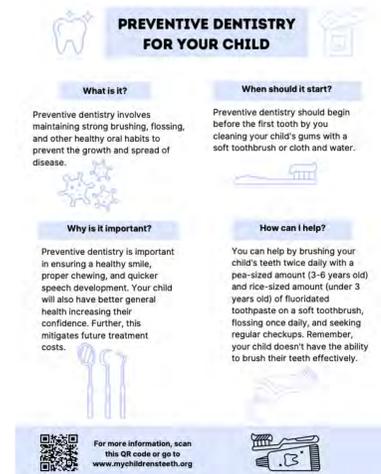


Figure 1 – Preventive Dentistry infographic

- Demonstrates the importance of preventive care
- Empowers parents with valuable insights into their child's oral health
- Provides clear brushing instructions for effective dental hygiene



Figure 2 – Nutrition infographic

- Highlights accurate nutrition information and dietary suggestions to promote optimal oral health
- Clarifies the connection between diet and oral health



Figure 3 – Post-treatment infographic

- Provides a comprehensive overview of the necessary post-treatment procedures recommended by The Centers' guidelines, ensuring patients are well-informed about documentation

Lessons Learned

Through this practicum experience, I learned about the importance of accessible healthcare services. While my project focused on dental care specifically, this principle extends to all types of care and resources. Accessibility promotes preventive care, which is more effective at mitigating risks compared to diagnostic interventions.

While observing the dentist and family development workers, I learned the importance of education and effective communication. Providing families with accurate information serves as the first step toward ensuring they get appropriate treatment. I also found that communication strengthened the relationships between these professionals and families, fostering trust that increased the likelihood of families receiving treatment.

Public Health Implications

The Centers' Home Visiting initiative aims to improve accessibility to dental care specifically for children aged 0-5 thereby reducing the need for extensive treatment in the future. Additionally, this program aims to educate families on the latest oral health practices, enabling them to stay informed regarding their child's health.

Acknowledgments

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