



Working with Health Professionals to Improve Access to Oral Health Care

The following tips are intended to help ensure that pregnant women, infants, and children (including children with special health care needs) enrolled in Head Start receive oral health care.

Recommended Schedule of Preventive and Primary Care Visits

Program Performance Standards 1304.20(a)(1)(ii-iv)

- Determine children's oral health status within 90 days of entry into your program.
- Be aware that Head Start children enrolled in Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) must receive oral health services, including an examination performed by a dentist.
- Be aware that EPSDT periodicity schedules may differ from national guidelines, especially in terms of the recommended age for the first dental visit, and that they may differ from state to state. Read your state's EPSDT guidelines and learn which oral health services are covered. If your program does not have a copy of the EPSDT guidelines, or if you need assistance, contact your state or local Medicaid office.
- Have an oral health professional determine whether children are up to date on the EPSDT schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary care. If a child is not, help schedule a dental appointment to bring the child up to date.
- Before a child's dental appointment, talk with the dental office staff about:
 - Who is responsible for scheduling dental appointments.
 - Who to contact if there is a problem before, during, or after the dental appointment.
 - Any special needs the child may have (e.g., medical, family, or behavioral conditions).
 - Who will pay for services.
 - Records your program needs to keep at its office.
- Work with oral health professionals to ensure that children are examined and diagnosed, a treatment plan is developed, and necessary treatment is completed by the end of the program year.

Family Partnerships

Program Performance Standard 1304.40(c)(1)(ii)

- Help pregnant women access comprehensive oral health care immediately after they enroll in your program. Care consists of health promotion and treatment, including dental examinations on a schedule determined by oral health professionals as early in the pregnancy as possible.
- If resources are limited, work with dental access programs or safety net dental clinics to obtain free or reduced-cost care for pregnant women.

Education

Program Performance Standard 1304.40(f)(1)

- Seek assistance from oral health professionals in designing education programs for families.
- Work with oral health professional societies and other health professional associations to develop approaches for educating their members about:
 - Head Start Program Performance Standards.
 - The importance of age-appropriate oral health preventive measures, anticipatory guidance (personalized instruction to help families understand what to expect during their child's development), early detection and referral, treatment, and follow-up care.
 - How to provide oral health care to pregnant women, infants, and young children.
 - How to integrate oral health into primary health care visits.



Community Partnerships

Program Performance Standard 1304.41(a)(2)(i)

- Partner with community organizations (for example, community health centers, dental clinics, WIC, health departments, dental schools and societies, and dental hygiene schools and societies) to promote oral health concepts and address oral health issues.
- Involve oral health professionals in your Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) to promote community linkages. Recruit one or two oral health professionals to serve as HSAC members. Contact public/community dental programs, schools, societies, and retired oral health professionals about the possibility of becoming members.
- Build relationships with oral health professionals; inform them about the oral health needs and barriers to care for pregnant women, infants, and children enrolled in Head Start.
 - Present at dental school and society and dental hygiene school and society meetings. Encourage students and society members to develop a volunteer “share-the-care” or “adopt-a-center” program.
 - Invite oral health professionals to visit your program to meet staff and children and their families.
- Recognize oral health professionals who provide care for children enrolled in your program.
 - Provide certificates of appreciation and/or program materials (for example, photographs or thank you letters from children and their families) that can be displayed in the dental offices.
 - Develop press releases describing the oral health professionals’ contribution, and submit the releases to local media.



Sources

Administration for Children and Families. 2001. *Head Start and Partners Forum on Oral Health*. Washington, DC: Administration for Children and Families.

Administration for Children and Families, Head Start Bureau. *Program Performance Standards and Other Regulations*. In Administration for Children and Families, Head Start Bureau [Web site]. Cited March 12, 2003; available at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/performance/index.htm.

Edelstein BL. 2000. Access to dental care for Head Start enrollees. *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* 60(3):221–229.

Resources

Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors
Web site: www.astdd.org

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
Web site: www.cms.gov

Head Start Bureau
Web site: www2.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb

Head Start Information and Publication Center
Web site: www.headstartinfo.org

National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center
Web site: www.mchoralhealth.org

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