

LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Award Project Evaluation

Project ID	HS-3
Title of Program	Miles of Smiles Pediatric Mobile Dental Unit
Program Category	Human Services
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Implementation Date	2/1/2015
FLSA Designation	Exempt
Project Team Members	

Description of Productivity Improvement

The Miles for Smiles Mobile Dental Program (M4SDP) transitioned the health department's traditional dental clinic from a fixed system with a high no-show rate and faltering sustainability to a higher capacity program with need-driven focus that has become 100% self-sustaining. The M4SDP re-aligned its focus to target high risk, vulnerable children utilizing a mobile unit that would go directly to the patient by collaborating with the school system. By doing so, the public health dental program went from a 50% no show clinic losing more than \$2,000 per month to an improved out-reach model with less than 10% no show rate and exceeding the break even point by about \$25,000 for the fiscal year. During that time, the static clinic that was providing dental care to children and adults, with only about 40% of the patient list being pediatric clients, was seeing only about 8-10 patients per day on average. With the new model, the dental staff is seeing about 18 children per day on average. In addition, the clinic increased the number of child visits from 1316 in fiscal year 2014 to more 2376 in fiscal year 2016; this is a 80.5% increase in child dental visits focusing on a high risk children, many whom have never seen a dentist prior to the M4SDP outreach. Further, the unit has provided more than 6,700 dental services to elementary Medicaid and uninsured children since its inception thus providing a reoccurring primary dental home to hundreds of children without one.

Description of why this project was initiated

Pediatric dental caries are the most prevalent and preventable chronic disease in children today. Based on a 2012 Medicaid utilization report, Wayne County had more than 50% of Medicaid children utilizing any dental care, which includes preventive screenings and sealants. In FY 2014, the Oral Health Section housed within the Division of Public Health made budgetary cuts to their statewide public health dental hygienist program and cut several positions. Wayne County was one of the counties affected. This began to compound the issue by resulting in less early detection and screening for young children, which in return, resulted in fewer referrals for children with moderate and severe oral health problems. In response to the coverage gap and growing disparity, the health director initiated the idea for the acquisition of a mobile dental unit to serve all elementary schools and focus on the high-risk areas in order to address the lack of oral health among many school age children.

Quantifiable results (sustainability, cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of service).

Indication of what resources were used and what was done with any accrued time savings

The initial invest of the mobile unit, including upfitting the unit with a state of the art digital panorex machine and digital bite wing capability, was \$220,000. Since February 2015, the unit has provided more than \$500,000 in dental services. As a product of the service value illustrated, the dental unit has demonstrated incalculable cost avoidance by allowing children to attend school regularly and avoid unnecessary absenteeism due to chronic pain; further, the preventive services and efficient care management provided on-site addresses other conditions from systemic impact, psychosocial development, and behavioral health issues associated with poor oral hygiene. Also, as previously stated, the prior dental health clinic was operating at a financial deficit each month trying to provide open-access dental health. The high no show rate, along with a high degree of non-compliant episodic adults, created an unpredictable revenue projection. By realigning dental health efforts with our public health mission, the health director was able to capture two distinct elements that turned around the sustainability chance for public health dental provision: 1- the health director decentralized pediatric dental services and relocated them where the children were; 2-he created a sustainability model for the perpetuation of yearly dental service and oral health focus by targeting at-risk populations with some degree of underutilized payer source to bridge health benefits with health services. As the two key elements merged, the dental program for Wayne County, the Miles for Smiles Dental Program opened up opportunity for more children to be served and better. In addition, the county M4SDP was recognized this year by Delta Dental Foundation of North Carolina in a first year partnership as an award recipient of \$1,500 to allow expansion into more schools. The fortuitous grant is just one of many growing opportunities that have become possible through this innovative outreach program.

Other descriptive information

The M4SDP also has developed schedules to now serve summer programs and after school centers such as the Boys and Girls Club, NC Head Start Program, and the W.A. Foster Center After-school program.