School Based Oral Health Needs Assessment

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Introduction

The Lehigh Valley is the third most populated region in Pennsylvania. Although there are several large hospitals in the region and two city health departments, oral coordination and access to care is deficient. A collaborative task force, Greater Lehigh Valley Access to Care (GLVAC), was formed to develop strategies for optimizing access for quality care for all members of the Lehigh Valley community with special emphasis on the underinsured and underserved. Although there have been a few scattered initiatives, oral health has continued to be a major concern. In the fall of 2006, oral health, particularly children’s oral health, was identified by GLVAC and several funders as a priority.

With the help of local and national oral health coalitions and two partnering urban school districts, the idea of a school-based dental sealant program, with an associated school district A had 2,497 students participate and school district B had 975 participating in the federal school lunch program, showed little significance.

School District B - Students with Untreated Decay Deciduous Teeth

A total of 3,472 students were screened between November 2007 and June 2008. Students at both school districts presented with a significant amount of decay in deciduous teeth, particularly

Conclusion

The proportion of students already being treated with pit and fissure sealants is well below the Healthy People 2010 goal of 50%. In fact, only 23% of students not participating in the federal lunch program have sealants. Access to care, lack of oral health education and the increasing number of families opting out of dental insurance coverage may provide for a new opportunity. The need for both preventive and restorative dental programs in Lehigh Valley is evident and has been recognized by various regional stakeholders. Over the past three years, addressing access to dental services, particularly for low income children, has become a priority. In addition to the dental sealant program, two new dental vans have been put into operation.

Since completion of this assessment, a dental sealant intervention and education program was initiated in both school districts. All second grade students (1,484) attended a forty minute dental health education program and 579 received sealants.

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References:


A Passion for Better Medicine.