

**BUREAU OF HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
SECTION OF ORAL HEALTH SERVICES**

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Annual Report July 1, 2006-June 30, 2007

To protect and promote the health of the community is the mission of the Tennessee Department of Health. In advance of this goal, the Oral Health Services Section (OHS) operates on the fundamental principles of preventing and controlling oral diseases through organized community efforts. Statewide school-based dental programs have been expanded to offer high-risk populations preventive services to include sealants, oral health education, screenings to identify children with unmet dental needs, referrals for these children, and follow-up on those children with urgent needs. Comprehensive dental services for children, unable to access care in the private system, are provided in fixed facilities located in local health departments statewide. In an effort to improve access to dental services for high risk children in underserved areas, the Bureau of Health Services of the Tennessee Department of Health operates 3 mobile dental clinics. These facilities are providing comprehensive dental services at school sites.

**ORAL DISEASE PREVENTION**

**Community Water Fluoridation:** OHS continues its proactive statewide community water fluoridation program. Funding is available for communities for the purpose of initiating fluoridation, purchasing new fluoridation equipment, replacing or updating used equipment, and purchasing fluoride chemical. Approximately, 96 percent of persons who drink water from community water systems in Tennessee are receiving the benefits of optimally fluoridated water compared with only 67 percent nationally. This state continues to be a leader in community water fluoridation having surpassed Healthy People 2000 and Healthy People 2010 national fluoridation targets of 75 percent.

The Oral Health Services Section of TDH, in conjunction with the Division of Water Supply of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, provides technical expertise and support to ensure that the fluoride content of the water supply is maintained at an optimal level of one part fluoride to one million parts water (1ppm).

The National Fluoridation Training School located at the Fleming Training Center in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, operates with resources from OHS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Public Health Service. Basic and advanced engineering courses in water fluoridation are provided at this training site to personnel involved with fluoridation programs from across the nation and around the world.

In response to a small but vocal group of opponents of community water fluoridation, the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) has worked with other partners including the TDA to educate the public as well as water plant operators about the safety and effectiveness of community water fluoridation.

**Fluoride Varnish Initiative:** During the 2004 legislative session, the Dental Practice Act was amended to allow registered nurses and nurse practitioners to apply fluoride varnish to underserved populations in public health clinics. This law was effective July 1, 2004. The TN Dept of Health, Oral Health Services began training for public health nurses and implemented the CFIT program or **Cavity Free in Tennessee**. This program targets children 0-5 years of age being seen in health department medical clinics for preventive dental services. Nursing staff screen these children and refer them to dental providers in addition to applying fluoride varnish twice yearly. July 1, 2006- June 30, 2007 approximately 10,000 at risk children have been screened, referred, and had fluoride varnish applied in Tennessee Dept of Health medical clinics by nursing staff.

#### **DENTAL CARE**

Many citizens of Tennessee are unable to afford even the most basic dental services. The Tennessee Department of Health attempts to provide care to this underserved population. This segment includes indigent children and adults, not covered by a third party payor, whose income level is insufficient to afford dental care in the private sector.

**Public Health Facilities:** 53 Dental facilities are located in local health department settings in 52 rural counties. Clinical dental services are available to this population on a full-time or part-time basis depending upon location and fees are based on a sliding fee scale according to income. All of our dental clinics are TennCare providers. Comprehensive dental care is provided to children and emergency dental care services are available for adults.

#### **Access to Care**

In the spring of 2001, in an effort to improve access to dental services for low-income Tennessee children the Bureau of Health Services of the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) began a process to significantly expand its' dental programs. Specifically, clinical dental services were enhanced through one-time special needs grants to counties for expansion and construction of dental clinics; preventive dental services were greatly expanded through a contract with TennCare funding the School-Based Dental Prevention Project; and services to remote areas without dental clinics were improved through the purchase of mobile dental clinics.

### **School-Based Dental Prevention Project (SBDPP)**

This program is a comprehensive preventive program involving dental screenings, referrals and follow-up for dental care, oral hygiene education, TennCare outreach, and sealants. Currently all 13 regions are delivering services in the SBDPP. During the 06-07 fiscal year, more than 139,000 children received dental screenings and more than 294,000 sealants were placed on approximately 52,000 children in 365 schools.

**Mobile Dental Clinics:** In an effort to improve access to dental services for high risk children in underserved areas, the Bureau of Health Services of the Tennessee Department of Health purchased 3 mobile dental clinics in the last several years. These clinics offer comprehensive care to low-income children at school sites. Last year 281 children received more than \$54,000 worth of dental services.

**Oral Health Services Web Site:** OHS web site provides a broad range of information to public health professionals, parents, community leaders, and the general public. The web site address for OHS is <http://health.state.tn.us/oralhealth/index.html>