

S-Situation

Sunbelt Human Advancement Resources, Inc. (SHARE) is located in the upstate of South Carolina. We serve four counties, Anderson, Greenville, Pickens and Oconee. Our program serves one thousand, five hundred ninety four (1,594) participants in Head Start and Early Head Start. In December of 2005, SHARE Head Start was one of only four grantees in Region IV to be awarded a very competitive grant to implement an Oral Health Initiative.

The overall goal of the Oral Health Initiative is to develop and implement an innovation oral health model based on best practices for children and families, expectant parents, and staff in Anderson, Greenville, Pickens and Oconee counties in South Carolina. Our agency's Oral Health Initiative includes four objectives: 1) To develop and implement a training module for parents and staff, 2) To provide early intervention oral health care for children birth to three years, 3) To develop and implement a preventive oral health care model for expectant parents and 4) To implement an oral health curriculum for children birth to five years. In order to meet these objectives, multiple partnerships were established within our community and throughout the state.

H-Hurdles

In implementing the Oral Health Initiative we struggled to overcome prevailing myths within our community among parents and staff that baby teeth do not need dental care and treatment. These myths cause parents to be reluctant or unwilling to participate in education sessions related to oral health care for their children. Parents avoiding dental treatment negatively affected our efforts to provide oral health care and intervention.

Our efforts for early oral health intervention for children six weeks to three years of age also presented a few challenges. Rural counties have a limited number of Pediatric dentists, therefore we had to use general dentist to provide exams and treatment for our children. Most general dentists have limited training in utilizing techniques that will allow them to treat children under the age of four. Therefore, this limited the number of children who were able to receive needed treatment in a timely matter.

In developing an early preventive oral health model for expectant parents we experienced a few challenges. We found that many private dentists were reluctant to treat our expectant parents during the first and second trimester when x-rays and/or local anesthesia were required. Dentists would only provide necessary treatment during the third trimester.

A-Action

In order to be most effective in implementing the Oral Health Initiative grant, our agency formed an Oral Health Services Advisory Committee. The committee includes private dentists, department heads of dental hygienist and dental assistant colleges, area dental clinics, health departments and other community health agencies. Committee members provide professional advice during annual meetings as well as advice throughout the year.

Our Oral Health Services Advisory Committee helped us select an appropriate curriculum and participated in our annual self assessment. This Committee proved to be a catalyst for more effective community collaboration at the January 2006 meeting. Management personnel from St. Francis Hospital, New Horizon Community Health Center and Greenville Tech were in the process of working together to assess the needs of the community and collaborate to build a new dental facility in Greenville County. We provided a forum for all stakeholders to network, communicate and collaborate to meet this goal. On October 31, 2007, the new dental clinic opened providing dental services to low income families on a sliding fee schedule. We continue to partner with New Horizon community health center referring children and families to the new facility for needed dental care.

Our agency also has established and/or expanded several community partnerships within our community to provide training to parents and staff. During the spring of each year we organize festivals with emphasis on oral health education. Dental professionals come to our annual Spring Fling to educate families and distribute oral health supplies and literature. A festival is held in every county. At the Greenville county festival, St Francis mobile dental unit also provides on-site dental exams and one private dentist office donated a Space Walk.

Our partnership with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control of Oral Health Division also provides oral health training to children, staff and parents. As a result of our activities during Oral Health Month in 2008, the South Carolina Dental Association, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and the Head Start Collaboration Office selected our program for a marionette puppet show. The puppet show was sponsored by Edventure Children's Museum in cooperation with the Marionette Theater in Columbia South Carolina. In October of 2008, staff traveled from Columbia to our Head Start program with a show entitled "Flora and Floppy goes to the dentist". Parents, staff and families along with two hundred twenty five (225) children enjoyed a professional marionette puppet show and receive innovative oral health education and books.

During the October 2007 and 2008 Conferences of the South Carolina Head Start Association, health managers and other personnel from Head Start and Early Head Start programs received training from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. Staff from the oral health division presented "Oral Health 101 train the trainer" workshop including information on proper hygiene, emergency care, and nutrition for children and expectant parents. Approximately twenty (20) were trained at this conference. Those who participated in this training provided additional training to staff, parents and children in their communities around the state.

Our program along with other Head Start programs, benefited from the Robert Wood Johnson Grant awarded to South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control to address oral health needs in South Carolina. At the 2007 South Carolina Head Start Association Conference, all fourteen Head Start grantees in South Carolina received oral health education resource packets. These packets included: Big teeth and toothbrush,

stickers, activity books, parent sheets, hour glass timers, and story books. Our program uses these materials to educate children and staff on best practices in oral health.

Head Start staff in programs throughout Region IV also benefited from our collaboration effects with South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. In 2008, Staff from South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's Oral Health Division brought "Oral Health Training 101" to the 2008 Regional Head Start Association's spring conference. Participants were informed on the history, process of formation, successes and challenges of collaboration in South Carolina and its positive effect on improving oral health care in South Carolina.

One of our goals was to provide early intervention for children birth to three including expectant parents. As a result of relationships formed with partners on the Oral Health Services Advisory Committee, our program benefited from a South Carolina Pageantry Project. The summer of 2008, Miss Teen Easley and her mother, the Director of Dental Program at Greenville Technical Collage, partnered with our expectant parent program. Her pageantry project was to improve oral education and health care in the community. Miss Teen Easley provided oral health education and distributed oral health care packages to our expectant parents and their Early Head Start children at Pleasant Valley Start Center.

We also partner with Greenville Technical College dental hygienist students. Students provide early intervention education to infants and toddlers to meet their requirement for a community service project. Dental Hygienist students provide education in our classrooms and demonstrate proper tooth brushing technique utilizing animal dental puppets. They read books to children and provide literature and dental supplies to children and parents at parent meetings. These students also provide dental education to expectant parents on preventing pregnancy complications related to periodontal disease.

Our agency also has established and/or expanded several community partnerships on the local, state and regional levels. These partnerships allow us to provide early intervention and treatment to Head Start and Early Head Start children. An innovative partnership involving Greenville Technical College, St. Francis Hospital, and New Horizon Community Health Center provided on-site dental examinations, professional cleanings and restorative dental treatment over the course of two days. In the fall of 2007, a mobile dental unit owned by St. Francis Hospital came to Pleasant Valley Center. This mobile dental unit is fully equipped with twelve portable dental chairs and two stationary chairs. Greenville Tech dental hygienist students and their instructor brought the chairs into the center and provided dental exams and professional cleanings while they obtained credit hours for clinical experiences. Children identified as needing treatment were referred to dentist at New Horizon Community Health Center. The next day, the mobile unit returned and dentists employed by New Horizon provided restorative treatment on children identified the previous day.

In order to provide early intervention to children of all ages, we also participate in an annual statewide initiative sponsored by the South Carolina Dental Association in

collaboration with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. The South Carolina Dental Association disseminates information and coordinates effects with Head Start health managers during meetings of the South Carolina Health Network. “Give a Kid a Smile Day” provides free dental services to uninsured children. Seven sites throughout the state are utilized including the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, and area Technical Education Colleges. The annual event is held in February and targets children of all ages. SHARE Head Start refers and transports children to Greenville Technical College and distributes information to families and staff. Dentist, assistants and hygienists are available to provide treatment, education with innovative and interactive activities for children and families.

Our preventive model for expectant parents includes classes, dental exam and treatment, home visit and instruction using a curriculum specific to the needs of pregnant women and their newborn infants. When the expectant parents enroll into the Early Head Start program, the case manager and oral health specialist work together to make sure each expectant parent has a dental home to receive the best care possible while in the Early Head Start program. A dental examination is completed, and if dental treatment is diagnosed the oral health specialist makes sure the treatment is completed prior to leaving the Early Head Start program. All expectant parents must complete educational classes including oral health, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, Fetal Growth and Development, Nutrition, Breast Feeding, Post Partum Depression, and Substance Abuse.

One partnership involving registered nursing students from the University of South Carolina, Upstate and dental hygiene students from Greenville Technical College are utilized to teach these classes. Nursing students use experiences in Head Start as clinical experiences. Instructors are trained in our curriculum prior to clinical experiences and students include all information in the curriculum as well as requirements for their courses. Our curriculum, Promoting Oral Health includes the following:

- Common dental problems during pregnancy
- Pregnancies effect on teeth and gums
- Periodontal disease and it’s effect on baby’s health
- Safety of x-rays
- Keeping your teeth healthy
 - Xytitol gum
 - Proper dental hygiene for mom and baby
 - Dentist visits
 - Proper Nutrition for mom and baby

When the baby is delivered, the case manager and oral health specialist provides oral health education during home visits. Staff emphasizes all information previously provided in curriculum as stated above. Dental materials such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss and educational literature are given to mother. The case manager and oral health specialist ensure a dental home for the newborn baby to visit at age one. The Oral health Specialist demonstrates care of infant’s gums after feeding and best practices to prevent the spread of bacteria. Upon enrollment into Early Head Start teachers wipe gums with a

clean moist cloth after each feeding. After teeth erupt, infant and toddlers toothbrushes are provided with toothpaste for daily use in the classroom.

To implement an oral health curriculum for children birth to five years, multiple partnerships were established within our community and throughout the state. After receiving input from the Oral Health Services Advisory Committee, the Health Services Advisory Committee and Policy Council, we implemented the Oral Health Curriculum after first piloting it in three centers. With the help of our education management staff, we successfully trained teaching staff on how to utilize the curriculum. We currently use a curriculum developed by California Childcare Health Program in November of 2005 throughout our program. This curriculum includes modules for children, expectant parents, parents and staff. Greenville Tech Dental students are also trained on the curriculum to ensure continuity of information. We also supplement the curriculum with an activity book and parent guide developed and distributed by the Oral Health Division of South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. We were awarded the Harris Fund Grant in 2007 and developed Oral Health Kits for classroom instruction. Every Head Start and Early Head Start Center received a kit including age appropriate hand puppets, books, videos, and dentist uniforms for dress up and role play in the classroom.

One of our program strengths is building and maintaining community partnerships. With the leadership of SHARE Head Start, the South Carolina Health Network was founded in 1997 providing peer mentoring, networking, problem solving, and training to health, nutrition and Disability & Mental Health Coordinators and Specialists from all South Carolina Head Start programs. Health Managers continue to be actively involved in the statewide Health Network. The network meets quarterly and hosts a Statewide Health Services Advisory Committee meeting annually. The statewide committee includes representatives of agencies on the state level including medical, dental, mental health and disabilities health professions as well as the Head Start Collaboration officer, State Dental Director, South Carolina Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Director, South Carolina Dental Association and other stakeholders.

Our agency is also involved in statewide initiatives sponsored by the State Dental Director of South Carolina Health Department's "Healthy Smiles, Partners for Oral Health". This group began with Head Start programs throughout the state and expanded to other groups working with children and families in South Carolina. {First Steps, Palmetto Healthy Start, Success by Six and Voices of South Carolina Children} All stakeholders meet annually at the Oral Health Forum to discuss ways to improve oral health services to children throughout the state. Problem solving sessions have been conducted addressing funding for dental services, access to dental care, and access to transportation.

In Sept 2007, we began to collaborate with the Division of Oral Health and its Advisory Council and Coalition, University of South Carolina's Arnold School of Public Health, the South Carolina primary health care association, Department of Health Services Policy, South Carolina Collaboration Office and Management to establish the State Dental Plan. The State Oral Health Plan describes the burden of oral disease in South Carolina, the collaborative

process used to develop a comprehensive plan for action, a vision statement with an action plan, and methods to evaluate desired plan outcomes. This Plan will guide oral health care in the state of South Carolina from 2007-2010 and is similar to goals of Healthy People 2010. Our agency serve on work groups related to early childhood, social marketing and children with special health care needs.

R-Results

The Oral Health Initiative has produced favorable outcomes for our children, expectant parents and their families. These outcomes include 1) Establishing and maintaining a permanent dental home for more children, families and expectant parents, 2) Increasing knowledge and practice of preventive oral health care for all participants, 3) Establishing more oral health partnerships in our community and throughout state. 4) Increasing awareness of oral health issues in non-dental professionals therefore improving oral health in Head Start and in our community. We have seen an increase in the numbers of children and expectant parents with permanent dental homes and those completing needed dental treatment. Our teachers, parents and expectant parents have a better understanding of best practices in oral health and are more likely to make them a part of their lifestyles.

The efforts of our Oral Health Initiative have strengthened partnerships within our community. We have sustainable partnerships with Greenville Technical Colleges Dental Hygienist Program, the University of South Carolina Upstate nursing program, New Horizon Community Health Center, St. Francis Health & Dental Mobile Unit, and other private dentists. These partners provide dental examinations, treatment and education to our Head Start children, expectant parents and their families. They also provide on-site examinations to Head Start and Early Head Start children. Expectant parents are referred for office examinations and needed oral health care. Some dentists also provide education and dental supplies and literature to our parents and children. As a result of our efforts to increase community partnerships we now have approximately eleven (11) additional private dentists providing services to our community.

We will continue to participate in annual meetings of the South Carolina Oral health to develop and implement the state dental plan. Other meetings may include workgroups with specific tasks as related to the overall state dental plan. Agencies in the forum collaborate to participate in National Dental health month and the American Dental Association's annual 'Give a Kid a Smile Day. South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control staff members will continue to provide statewide dental education to staff of preschool programs in South Carolina. Dental Training 101, Train the Trainer model will be provided to Head Start programs at both the state and Region IV National Head Start Association conferences.

EVALUATION

In the future, we highly recommend that agencies first form an Oral Health Services Advisory Committee. Dental professionals on this committee were instrumental in building and maintaining community partnerships to assist with every aspect of the Oral Health Initiative. Members are available throughout the year, giving assistance, advice

and input into policies and procedures, problem solving and programmatic issues. Committee members collaborate with each other therefore, improving service delivery for their clients. These relationships proved to be the most available asset for promoting best oral health practices to children and families in our community.

In order to ensure the success of our Oral Health Initiative we hired a dental health professional with primary responsibility to implement the Initiative. This kept focus on every aspect of the grant and timelines were met as required. The entire health team also assisted the Oral Health Specialist and other managers worked together for its success. We could not have done every thing in the Oral Health Initiative and made an impact on our community if we did not work together as a team.

Implementation of the curriculum for staff, expectant parents, children and their families increased knowledge of best practices in oral health. Parents became more interest in attending meetings and trainings and became excited about their children's oral health care. Parents also were more cooperative in seeking follow-up treatment when cavities were identified. Head Start and Early Head Start staff also became more aware of oral health problems in the classroom as well as responding to dental emergencies. Lesson plans contained more dental education activities with interactive play, helping children to be more aware of oral care and hygiene. More Early Head Start children are seeing dentists at one year of age.