

Title: Kona Oral Health Project

Partner Programs: Kona WIC and West Hawaii Community Health Center (WHCHC)

Background/Introduction:

Hawaii's children (keiki) continue to have the worst rates of oral health in the nation partially due to the lack of public fluoridated water (except on military bases) and inadequate access to oral health care, especially on Neighbor Islands. This lack of access for children on the island of Hawaii cost the Department of Human Services MedQuest Division \$803,257 in FY 2008 to fly 2301 children and parent/guardian to Oahu for dental treatment.

The Kona WIC Program serves approximately 1600 limited resource women, infants and children a month on the west side of Hawaii County. The Kona WIC Program operates out of leased space in Kealakekua and is not co-located with other medical/oral health services.

The WHCHC provides quality comprehensive and integrated health services at the main center location in Kailua-Kona and a Keiki Health Center at Kealakekua as well as a mobile dental van. The WHCHC is not a WIC provider.

Project Goals: This pilot project offers oral health visits by WHCHC staff at the Kona WIC site using existing infrastructure. Goals are to:

- increase the number of WIC children with access to early dental care and preventive dental services;
- increase caregiver knowledge about early preventive care;
- promote a dental home; and
- develop/implement systems to enable WIC to serve as the entry point for oral health care.

Method: Establishing the pilot project involved the following steps: collaborative planning including a formal memorandum of understanding, promotion to staff including a "knee-to-knee" demonstration, promotion to WIC clients, parent education, clinic encounters, case management and finally evaluation.

Results: 80 children have received oral assessment, anticipatory guidance and fluoride varnish at a total of four half-day clinics, one Friday per month, from November 2010 to February 2011. Treatment: 45 were placed on recall status, 11 needed treatment, and 24 needed urgent treatment. Children needing dental treatment were referred to either the Keiki Health Center or to Community Case Management Corporation. At first visit, 72 children were covered by MedQuest, 2 by private insurance, and 6 were uninsured.

Summary/Discussion: All involved have embraced the pilot project. WIC appreciates the added bonus of oral health linkages and the WHCHC is able to recruit new patients. WIC clients appreciate having expedited access to a dentist. The partners look forward to further evaluation and potential expansion.

Linda Chock, M.P.H., R.D., Hawaii Department of Health WIC Services Branch